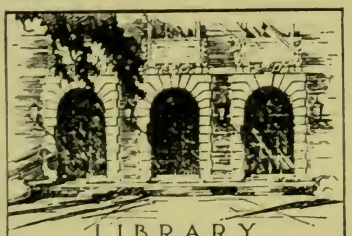

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# WILLIAM BATHURST.

VOL. I.

# WILLIAM BATHURST.

BY

LEWIS HOUGH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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# CHAPTER I.

## THE JOHNSTONES AT BREAKFAST—IMPORTANT FROM CHINA.

THIRTY years ago a highly-decorated villa by the side of the London road, and in the parish of Acton, used to attract the admiring, or—as it is impossible to please everybody—sometimes, perhaps, the scornful gaze of travellers. Its style was Elizabethan, Gothic-Egyptian, with a touch of the Chinese-Swiss. It had verandahs, turrets, painted windows, gable ends, and comic waterspouts, and was, in fact, the kind of habitation which naughty Ruskins will find provided for them in Limbo. That part of the garden which was hid behind this hybrid dwelling was somewhat neglected, but

the visible portion in front was so prim and tidy, the lawn so carefully mown, the gravel walks so smoothly rolled, the beds and the plants which slept in them so carefully arranged to correspond with one another, in form and tint, that you would have concluded the gardener to be either a mathematical Quaker or a Dutchman. The semicircular drive which enclosed this Euclidean garden, and which was destined, in theory, to enable carriages to deposit their contents on the steps of a portico of such pretensions as to suggest the idea that some Arabian practical joker, with a pocket Genius, had run off with the mansion belonging to it and left the villa in its stead, was entered at either end through a smart iron and brass gate, and each gate was guarded by a pair of stone griffins, who were perched on the walls flanking it, comfortably seated on their tails, their heads on one side, their tongues protruded, and their fore paws dangling listlessly like those of a dog who is

"begging." Four most amiable-looking griffins, with facetious expressions of face; roguish griffins, who would not scare the juvenile population for the world, but seemed rather to say, "There's an apple tree out there, at the back; come, over with you: we won't bite, bless you!—we are only stone, and we would not hurt you if we could." Had I been the fortunate possessor of that mongrel abode, my life would have been embittered by the suspicion that those impudent monsters were poking fun at me with the passers-by; but Mr. Johnstone had neither a thin skin nor a grain of the sense of humour. An ingenious, perhaps a quizzical, member of the Heralds College had declared the Johnstone crest to be a rampant griffin, and Mr. Johnstone's new house, his gates, his spoons, his seals, his envelopes, his hat lining, his books, his umbrella, broke out suddenly with that symbol of the greatness of his ancestry, in a way which led Jack Share to warn his friends on 'Change

against too near an approach to a man who had evidently got a highly-infectious rampant griffin measles. But Mr. Johnstone cared nothing for Jack Share's vulgar ribaldry.

"No men despise good birth but those who have not got it," said he; and he delighted in his griffins, and thought his house was what he called it, "an imposing structure!"

And he was right—it was imposing. From the walls, which appeared at a distance to be of solid stone, but which were really of thin brick plastered over with cement, to the ornamental monsters, which were the rightful property of quite another Johnstone family, with whom the present man had no more connection than with the Guelfs, all was imposition.

Let bad taste do what it can to make a place ugly, the fairy wand of Nature can transform the deformed hag into an enchanting Columbine; and so it happened that on one fine May morning this formal square-toed garden, and this hideous building, looked quite

pretty in the sunshine. For the gardener who had arranged the former had omitted to paint the lawn and the flowers drab, and the rose and the clematis straggled gracefully over the latter.

It was a quarter to eight, and Mrs. Johnstone, the lady of the house, was engaged in making the tea for breakfast. She was a comely dame, between forty and fifty, neatly dressed and becomingly capped, with a good-natured placid expression of countenance, and looked, as she ladled out the conventional number of spoonfuls into the pot, as if it were her special mission to preside at a middle-aged man's morning meal, and start him fairly, in good humour and equable spirits, on his daily course of struggle with the world.

A boy of nine, and a girl a year younger, were engaged, the former in persecuting, the latter in protecting, a doll, who had suffered much from the infantile diseases to which it had been artificially subjected. The red paint,

which had broken out in blotches on its face, when it had caught the measles, had refused to be washed off on its recovery, without injury to its original complexion, and the process of vaccination had shed all the bran of its arms. Its feet had not been improved by immersion in hot water on the occasion of its catching cold, and its hair, when cut, refused to grow again. The somewhat stern corporal punishment of seizure by the lower extremities, and dashing of the head against a wall, inflicted upon it when naughty, had not the same beneficial effect upon its personal appearance that we will hope it produced in its moral character; and altogether it was a dilapitated doll, and on that account more beloved by the miniature woman who mothered it than all the pink, blue-eyed, flaxen-haired, delicately-dressed members of the same waxen family who reposed unheeded on a shelf in the nursery cupboard.

"Now. Harry, do let your sister alone!"

expostulated Mrs. Johnstone, when the struggle became noisy; "and, Mary, you had better put your doll away somewhere; your papa will be down directly, and you know that he does not like to see playthings scattered about the breakfast-room."

Mary, a good, obedient little dear as ever ate bread and butter, put her treasure to bed in the drawer of a wot-not, and her brother looked disconsolately round for some other object worthy of his mischief.

For Nature has denied the human infant, or Civilization has deprived him of, the tail which kittens and puppies can always amuse themselves by pursuing. I do not know whether male creatures are, as a rule, more restless than their females; for the question has only just occurred to me, and my means of solving it are, for the moment, limited. My tom-cat indeed is very calm and lazy, spending the whole of his time, with the exception of the half hour before dinner, and an occa-

sional moonlight night of peculiar brilliancy, in sleep, while an old lady on the opposite side of the street is fidgeting and bustling about all day. But these two differ (let satirists and naturalists say what they like) in species as well as in sex; and I have no female cat or male old woman to observe, so that I can come to no fair conclusion on the subject. I have a vague idea, however, that little girls are more placid than little boys, and the small Johnstones may have originated the opinion; for, while Mary kept quite still, the mother had to fire perpetual shots across Harry's bows to bring him to as he ran into impropriety.

"Harry, do not torment that wretched cat!"

"Harry, do not pick the loaf!"

"Let the fire-irons alone, Harry!"

"If you go near the urn again, I will send you up to the nursery, Harry. Do sit down and be quiet. Good gracious! child, do not touch your papa's letters!"

These were neatly arranged, together with the morning paper, and a small book of Family Prayers, before Mr. Johnstone's plate; and as the clock was still striking eight, the master of the house turned the handle of the door and entered the room.

He was a man of middle height and spare figure, with a large nose, high cheek-bones, thin lips, fishy, greyish eyes, and sandy hair and whiskers, slightly discoloured by time. His dress was scrupulously neat and clean, but so sombre in hue, that he seemed to be in continual mourning for some one; his neck cloth was literally a "choker," being very high, stiff, and tight, obliging him to move his shoulders with his head whenever he turned it.

You may get a good insight into a man's disposition by observing how his children meet him of a morning. The little Johnstones did not run up to their father with noisy babble, or look up at him with the quiet but bold

smile which feels sure of meeting a bright glance in return, but tendered their greetings with the air of scholars performing a ceremonial which is part of their education.

"Ring the bell for prayers, Mary," said Mr. Johnstone, seating himself at the table, and opening the little black book.

The religious exercise of the morning took exactly seven minutes, which gave the tea nice time to brew; and then Mr. Johnstone commenced his breakfast, which was a light one, consisting of dry toast or bread and butter—for he was apt to be slightly bilious in the early morning; and as he nibbled and sipped, he opened the various documents which lay before him. Some of these he threw into a waste-paper basket, others he put into his breast-pocket, according to their respective worthlessness or worth, till at last his attention was arrested, and then entirely absorbed, by a letter written on flimsy foreign paper, and dated from China.

It was nothing very wonderful that Mr. Johnstone should receive a letter from any part of the world. He was a sort of general agent, and transacted business for merchants in all the five quarters—a bull which we must continue to make, until the coming geographer invents some such word as quinters—Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and Australia; and this present epistle was from his regular Canton correspondent. But business letters were generally placed by him in his breast coat-pocket for perusal in his office, and the exceptional part of his present conduct was, that he stopped in his breakfast to read this one carefully then and there. It was not the rate of exchange, or of freights, or assurances, or the price of silks, or teas, which caught his attention, but that which followed these advices; and this, after having laid the letter down and considered for a minute, he read out for the benefit of his wife:—

"I shall forward to you by the *Hercules*,

which sails on the 14th proximo, a female child, of the age of five years, the daughter of Alexander Cook, Esq., one of the largest merchants in this town, and with whom, as you will recollect, we have from time to time done extensive business. Mr. Cook, a recent widower, is anxious to save his only child, who has lately shown signs of delicacy, from the effects of that climate, so baneful to Europeans, which killed her mother. He wishes the little girl to be placed in some quiet family, where there are young children, and where she would be treated by the parents as much as possible like one of their own. As he proposes to allow a sum of three hundred pounds per annum for the child's board and lodging, you will probably find no difficulty in placing her in some suitable family. Many clergymen would doubtless gladly accept the charge; or should you yourself desire to undertake the care of the little girl, Mr. Cook would of course feel much gratified by the knowledge that his

daughter was a member of the household of one so well known for the exactitude with which he attends to all moral and religious duties. Hum?"

"Poor little dear!" cried Mrs. Johnstone. "No mother, no relations in England apparently. She *would* be a wicked, cruel woman who neglected such a charge. Pretty creature!"

"The letter does not allude in any part to the personal appearance of the little girl," replied her husband, "and I am therefore at a loss to know why you designate her as 'pretty'; besides, beauty is a vanity, likewise a snare."

"All children are pretty at that age," said Mrs. Johnstone.

"Three hundred a year!" observed Mr. Johnstone, who had fallen into a musing.

"It would be a great privilege," he continued, after a pause, "to superintend the budding of this young flower, to guard her from the manifold temptations of this wicked

world, to—she will be quite an heiress!"

"Heiress or not, I will do my best to supply the place of the mother she has lost, if you decide to let her come here."

"Bless me!—I mean to say dear me! for we should guard against the slightest slip of the unruly member, and the light use of the words of blessing savours of profanity—it is a quarter to nine, and the omnibus will be passing presently. Harry, fetch my hat and gloves. Think this matter over, Jane, and we will talk of it in the evening."

Mr. Johnstone drew on his gloves, which he buttoned carefully at the wrists, placed his hat precisely on his head, took his umbrella, and, walking solemnly round the gravel sweep, passed out between his guardian griffins, a most respectable, religious, well-to-do man, who united the service of God and Mammon in a highly-satisfactory manner.

Presently the city omnibus drew up, and Mr. Johnstone took his seat in the left-hand

corner next the door, a place which was always reserved for him.

"Two minutes late!" said he, looking at his gold hunter; "this will never do!"

And the other passengers gazed with awe upon the man who had a seat kept for him in a vehicle of such pretensious equality as to bear in its very name an expression of the most advanced democratic sentiments, who carried such a handsome watch, with such an imposing monster engraven upon it, and who could not spare two minutes of his important time. And Mr. Johnstone liked to inspire awe.

Riding inside an omnibus is essentially conducive to meditation, and I fancy that what city men, living in the suburbs of London, have gained of time by the substitution of railways under or above ground, they have lost in opportunity for calm reflection. Seated in the vehicle which used to convey them to their place of business twenty years ago,

they could neither read, nor talk, nor see out of the window—they were forced to think. And so Mr. Johnstone thought, and his reflections ran in this wise :—

"Three hundred a year; for the first few years, that will give upwards of two hundred clear profit. I wonder whether the sum is supposed to include dress, and, after a while, pocket-money. As for her education, that will cost nothing just at present, but when she comes to require masters it will be a consideration. Cook must be a warm man; if he should not marry again, this girl will be an heiress; and even if he does, I should think something handsome will fall to the share of this only child by the first marriage. She will be brought up with Harry; and surely, with judicious treatment, the young people might make a match of it. It would probably be a good thing for Harry; and if he liked to invest his wife's money in the business, why—but that is a very distant speculation. It will

look well to have this child placed under my care; I shall call myself her guardian—guardian has a respectable sound about it, and I need not say a word about the small pecuniary remuneration I may receive for my trouble and responsibility. People will say, what a respectable Christian man Mr. Johnstone must be, that this Mr. Cook, who is not related to him, and only knows him by repute, should be so eager to place his daughter under his care!"

This was the counsel which Mr. Johnstone took with himself; and as, when it was taken, he was well shaken, or, for some other reason, it was rapid in its effects, and penetrated his mind so thoroughly, that he felt no doubt but what it was his interest to receive and do his best for this legitimate, well-provided foundling; and by the time the omnibus disgorged him at the Bank, he had finally determined on his course of action.

As may have been gathered, he was a man

of a serious turn of mind—not that his religion had any particular practical effect on his mind or practice; but circumstances had thrown him in the way of profiting by the profession of strict methodistic principles; and he had quietly fallen into the habit of talking as if he were better than the rest of his fellow-creatures, until at last he actually believed that such was the case. Piety, indeed, had been the knife with which he had opened his oyster. At the early age of eighteen he had made the discovery that the Church of England was itself one of the pomps which it called upon its children to renounce, and had so won the heart of a Wesleyan uncle, who took him into his house of business, and eventually made him a partner, initiating him thereby into the secret, that the firm was on the eve of bankruptcy. But the dissenting connexion hang much together, and young Johnstone, who was exceedingly regular in his attendance at chapel, and charmingly

nasal in his singing and responses, had established himself in the good graces of an elder of the congregation, who had a warm income, and a pleasant daughter, who was taken as a sleeping partner into the firm, which was once more set going by her dowry.

Johnstone was not so unwise or ungrateful as to give up a course of conduct which had proved so useful, especially as he had no taste for the frivolities which were condemned by the puritanic set with whom he had identified himself; while, on the other hand, "the sins he was inclined to" were encouraged and christened by them with the virtuous names of Industry, Frugality, Self-respect, Proper Pride, Firmness of Character. And so he came in time to be an elder, a patriarch, a leading man amongst a dissenting colony, who were congregated in the neighbourhood of Acton.

It must be confessed that when he first discovered his armorial griffins, and settled at

Acton, he had a carnal longing to lapse into the bosom of the more aristocratic establishment; and if he could have been a churchwarden and gained admission into the houses of the better class of gentry residing about there, he might have fallen away. But he was not the man to drop the substantial importance and consideration he enjoyed for the shadow of improving the quality of his gentility; and he deferred his conversion until such time as he should be rich enough to force his superiors in social position to court him and do him homage.

That any such worldly thought as that it was slightly vulgar to be a dissenter had ever entered the breast of Mr. Johnstone, was of course entirely unsuspected by the Bethesda congregation, none of whom would have repudiated the idea with more horror, or a firmer conviction that it was a calumny direct from the manufactory of the craftsman who is supposed to deserve the medal for

that sort of article, than Mrs. Bathurst, the widow of a solicitor, a lady of strict opinions, tender heart, innumerable prejudices, and a tremendous bump of veneration, who lived at Acton with a boy of ten years old, an only child, and who, being a near neighbour of the Johnstones, and in the same religious set, had gradually fallen into a familiarity with them, which by no means seemed likely to breed contempt. It was to this lady that Mrs. Johnstone, about three hours after her husband's departure, carried the important news of the probable accession to her family, which had been mooted at breakfast that morning.

## CHAPTER II.

### MRS. BATHURST, MASTER BATHURST, AND HORACE BATHURST.

Mrs. Bathurst lived in a middling-sized house, built on the plan of a large one. It had a disproportionate hall, with an oak staircase, and the kitchen and offices were separated from the main building by the length of a gallery, and, together with the stables, a dog-kennel or two, a pigsty, and a chicken establishment, formed quite a separate quadrangle; the ground of the yard being paved with large stones, the interstices between which it would have been any man's labour to have kept free from moss, conse-

quently they were not so cleared. All this stood in the centre of about an acre of garden; but the trees were so fine, and the shrubbery so thick and extensive, that it might have been ten times as large, for all the eye could from any point tell to the contrary. The place had a great deal of wall about it. One high wall divided the kitchen from the flower-garden, another high wall shut out the yard, while the entire premises were surrounded by a third. These walls, which were, like the house, of reddish brick, gave the place a somewhat monastic appearance; but then, in revenge, they were covered with fruit-trees of a rare excellence. Oh! the peaches and nectarines! oh! the pears, which came to Elysian maturity on those seventeenth century walls! And then there was an enormous mulberry-tree;—just think of the real meaning of that! Have you ever lived with a mulberry-tree, from which a ruthless fate has torn you in later years? If so, I pity the

pungency of your regrets, as you toss occasionally on your sleepless couch; I pity and sympathise! Oh! to put on a brown holland garment, which cannot be injured by any amount of staining, and a hat of sufficient brim to protect the neck from the luscious shower (I wonder if the first Quaker was a mulberry-eater?), and to wander out directly after breakfast, on a sunny, sultry morning, to the blissful tree, to wade over the purple soil to the trunk, and, mounting up by ladder or otherwise, to seat oneself on a convenient branch, and devour! For mulberries, like kisses, must be culled by oneself, or they are flavourless. I have often wondered whether it would be a good bargain to strike with Fate to live with a mulberry-tree for five years, and then die of cholera? Perhaps the knowledge of impending sufferings would injure the flavour; and during the long period of the year that the fruit is not ripe, there would be no benefit derivable but the

privilege of keeping silkworms; but then, on the other hand——But it is a difficult question.

Outside the house all was delightful, for the gardener was likewise the gardener of half a dozen other people, and could not be perpetually sweeping up leaves, mowing the grass, and marring the shrubs with his pruning knife, so that you could dig, and plant, and water, and extemporise arbours, and enjoy yourself; but inside all was prim. (He was a genius who invented that word *prim*—it is one of the most expressive in the English language, for the utterance of it forces the face to look the thing.) The cook and housemaid were sober-capped and prim; the boy, who came to the house every day to clean knives and shoes, was prim; the chairs, tables, curtains, carpets, were as old-fashioned, stright-backed, and prim as inanimate things can be; the cat was prim—but cats always are; and, by Minerva, Mrs. Bathurst herself was prim!

She was a fine tall lady of about fifty, who made the most of her height and age, for she always sat bolt upright on the edge of her chair, in an attitude which added inches to the former; and she still wore a widow's cap, which, with two bands of grizzled hair, which, instead of being stowed away under it, were brought prominently forward over her forehead, gave an air of at least another ten years to the latter. Her eyes were grey, her nose aquiline, her lips somewhat thin, and habitually compressed. The salient points of her character were these: she had a real and heart-felt desire to do her duty to the best of her ability to God and man, but was not always quite clear as to what that duty was; it was necessary to her happiness to be dictated to by some one in whom she was willing to place unlimited confidence, and to be able herself to exercise a like slightly tyrannical influence over others. She liked to play moon to somebody else's sun, and ought

properly to have been a Catholic, and lady abbess, with a bishop to bully her, and a bevy of nuns to bully. And yet *bully* is a strong term, for she was of a kind and generous disposition, and really wished to forward the happiness and well-being of all with whom she came into contact; she exacted no more deference from those she deemed her inferiors than she was willing and anxious to pay to those whom she fancied her superiors. She was *very good*, as it is called, to the poor—getting up blanket clubs and soup kitchens in their behoof, constantly visiting them, and deluging them with good advice and tracts; and yet they did not much like her. They thought that she took out her money's worth in the gratification afforded to her vanity by playing the lady patroness, and esteemed themselves quits.

If you were to throw a hundred pound note into a needy man's face, he would probably pocket it with the affront, but he

would not feel very grateful to you; and that is somewhat the fashion in which a great many well-meaning ladies confer their benefits on the poor. Their manner arises merely from ignorance of human nature, and a sort of indistinct idea that, because a man has rough hands and shabby clothes, he must have blunt sensibilities. They imagine that the lower classes are different in some vague way from themselves, and do not realise the idea that the emotions of the heart and soul are not lodged with a man's balance at his bankers, but are just as common to those who are ignorant of the very nature of the three per cents., as to the millionnaire. They cannot comprehend that when they have taught a man to fawn, they have degraded him, and brought him consequently nearer to the vice and crime from which they honestly desire to shield him, by destroying that self-respect which is one of his best bulwarks against temptation.

These things are beginning to be understood now, but there is still a lamentable amount of ignorance regarding them; and at the time of which I am writing, such sentiments would have been thought revolutionary —Mrs. Bathurst would have esteemed them wicked.

So long as her husband was alive, she got on well enough; he was a clever, sensible man, who was fond of his wife, and understood her thoroughly, and she loved and honoured him with all her heart; but on his death, some six years back, she had fallen into a gloomy state, to which the teaching of a nonconformist minister in the neighbourhood was particularly congenial; and having, by chance, had some of his printed sermons put into her hand, she had been attracted by them to his chapel, and had ever since remained one of the principal members of his congregation. The Rev. John Pogram may have been a very well-meaning man, but certainly he was a very

shallow, ignorant, vulgar, and self-satisfied one; and how he should have been able to make an educated lady believe in him, rather than in the learned, unassuming gentleman, whose clerical claims to preach and teach were legitimate, I do not know. Or rather, I cannot say here, as the question is a long and somewhat dry one; but there are a great many people who, when they see

"Fools rush in where angels fear to tread,"

conclude that the fools are wise and trustworthy people who know all about it, and that the angels are nincompoops. Bear in mind, young man, that in all your dealings with the mass of your fellow-creatures, especially the female portion of them, *the higher price you ticket yourself, the more you will fetch.*

However, Mr. Pogram himself sank into insignificance in Mrs. Bathurst's eyes, by the side of Mr. Johnstone, principally, I believe,

because of the immense deference which the somewhat oleaginous minister paid to the man on whom he was in a great measure dependent for the keeping up of his chapel, and the consequent supply of sufficient dross to provide for his own creature comforts.

Poor Mr. Pogram ! What right have I to sneer at him? He had a female Pogram, and several small Pograms, to support; and I daresay he was not more of a toady than many a man who holds a regular commission in the Church Militant is to *his* patron; but the flattery of a coarsely-reared, uneducated man is a more revolting thing than that of one who has tact and refinement; and poor Pogram was provoking.

Mrs. Johnstone found Mrs. Bathurst in her garden, and looking limper than usual, as she wore a broad-brimmed hat, and no shawl, and an apron, and had thick dog-skin gloves on, being engaged in cutting off the dead roses, and collecting them in a basket, to be mixed

with some nastiness, and stored away in the China vases which stood in her drawing-room.

The basket was held by her little boy William, a child of about ten, with flaxen hair, blue eyes, which never rested on anything for more than a moment, and a remarkably pretty mouth. He seemed to consider himself as assisting at a most important ceremony, and, judging from the care he took to prevent such an accident, to think that the dropping of a rose corpse would be attended by some great misfortune, would offend, perhaps, one of the fairies who took especial care of the flowers. For the garden where he spent so great a part of his life, alone, was haunted ground to him; and though he was never indulged with those profane story-books which so gild the early years of other children, his imagination supplied the void, and peopled every corner, bower, and shady nook with creatures of its own.

Dull? No child is dull unwatched by its elders; for it has its own schemes, theories, experiments, which even a mother's mind cannot comprehend. Watch, unobserved, a group of little ones at play; why, what we call *play* is their real earnest part of life; it is the sober discourse of grown-up people; it is the lessons they learn, and the "rational" amusements they share with their parents which are the shadowy and unpractical things to them. Take a child to an exhibition, a museum; show him this, that, and the other, explain their uses, and endeavour to interest him; but do not suppose, however successful you may apparently have been, that you have managed to adapt your mind to his. He has seen everything with eyes far different from yours, and while you have been showing him the principle upon which a screw steamer is propelled, he has been discovering new worlds in it. Infancy is a Garden of Eden, and as the little inhabitant plucks apple after apple

from the Tree of Knowledge, the delights of Paradise fade, for joy lies in imagination, not fruition; and if knowledge is power, ignorance and inexperience constitute happiness. But then that ignorance should be universal, not exceptional, or else counteracting influences will intervene to destroy its effect; so we must even go with the stream, and waste our lives in learning how little we can learn.

Mrs. Johnstone had brought her own children with her, to William Bathurst's great delight, who, on the first glimpse he got of his playmates, gave the basket to his mother, and ran towards them, crying—

"Oh! Mary, Harry, I am so glad you are come! Do come and see the tree where I saw the squirrel yesterday!"

Leaving their children to amuse themselves as they pleased, the two mothers had a long gossip, first walking about the garden, and then in the drawing-room.

"How kind, how Christian of Mr. Johnstone to receive this little girl!" cried Mrs. Bathurst, when the other had exhausted her budget; "and, oh! what a blessed privilege her father must consider it to place her in such hands!"

"Why, it is all very well for Mr. Johnstone," said the other, "who is in the city all day; but the whole trouble, care, and management of the child will fall on me. And it is very evident, from the way you speak," she added with a smile, "that my husband will get the credit. However, I will do my best for the poor thing."

"Well, now," said Mrs. Bathurst, "I am anxious to consult you upon a matter of my own. I invariably wish, so far as it is consistent with my duty, to follow out my poor husband's last desires; and I know that he always intended William to go to school at eleven, and he will be that in August."

"Dear me! why, Harry is going to school

in the autumn, and I dread it so, you cannot think."

"And yet you have a girl."

Mrs. Johnstone took hold of Mrs. Bathurst's wrist, and gave it a slight squeeze.

"If it is for his good, you know, why—what a pretty pair they make, do they not?"

And so *they* did, especially to a mother's eye. *They* being William and Mary, who were standing within sight of the window, with their arms round each other's necks, glancing upwards at Harry, who was both literally and metaphorically up a tree, having clambered up a large one in pursuit of the squirrel, who had again deigned to exhibit himself, and finding it somewhat difficult to get down again.

"What profession is William to be brought up to?" continued Mrs. Johnstone, with a thoughtful brow; for she was at heart an arrant though an unpractised match-maker;

and unaware of the sudden and revolutionary transformations which take place in the heart and voice of man at the age of fifteen, after which period it is impossible to guess whether he will retain the organ or the sweetheart of his childish days.

"His worldly prospects would be best considered by his following his father's profession of the law," replied Mrs. Bathurst, "as his uncle, Mr. Horace Bathurst, who now carries on the business, has promised to pay for his being articled, and finally to admit him into the firm. But that is a very future consideration," she added, with a smile; "my present difficulty is about sending him to school—I should like to ask Mr. Johnstone's advice upon it."

"Mr. Johnstone will be very happy to give you every assistance he can, I am sure. He does not like the usual style of education for boys, I know, and thinks they ought to learn something instead of Greek and Latin. I do

not understand the merits of the question myself, but I know that Harry is to go to a school where they teach botany and chemistry, and phrenology, and I don't know what. But I wonder that you do not consult your brother-in-law," added the lady, who did not see that Mr. Johnstone was the phœnix Mrs. Bathurst esteemed him, wives being occasionally lamentably blind to their husband's perfections.

"Ah! there is my difficulty," replied Mrs. Bathurst. "Mr. Horace is the trustee under my poor husband's will, and would be my boy's guardian if anything happened to me; and, in short, I have felt obliged to ask his advice, and he is coming down here this afternoon to stay for a day or two, and talk to me about it. But oh! my dear, he is unconverted! In the wicked days before I had my call, I belonged to the worldly Establishment; my poor husband lived and, alas! died a member of that offshoot of Rome; my poor child was

baptized according to its forms, and his uncle Horace was his godfather. I much fear he will urge my tender lamb's being placed under the care of one of those time-serving shepherds who devour the flock; and I mistrust myself lest an over-anxiety for my boy's temporal prosperity should cause me to neglect his eternal interests. I should like to consult Mr. Johnstone."

"He will come down and see you, I am sure, any evening you like," replied Mrs. Johnstone. "But, as far as his advice or example goes, you may make your mind easy, for the school he has selected for Harry is kept by a member of the Church of England, and rather a high churchman too, they say."

"You amaze me!" cried Mrs. Bathurst. "And are you not very uneasy?"

"Why, what can be done? There are no good schools kept by masters of our persuasion, for all the good scholars who have the gift of teaching seem to go through the

Universities. And, after all, it does not make much difference; you, my dear, have but lately joined us, and have only seen the bright side; now I have been born and bred a dissenter, and can see that there is just as much worldliness amongst ourselves as amongst church folk, and, as a natural result of our stricter professions, a trifle more hypocrisy. But your brother-in-law has arrived, and is coming up the path. Dear me! what a quantity of luggage! There are two men to carry it up from the garden-gate. Good-bye. I will find my children—don't you trouble; you attend to your brother-in-law."

The procession, which was now approaching the house by the gravel path, struck little William Bathurst, who watched it from behind a tree, with an awe which was tempered by hopeful expectation. First of all came a man staggering under the load of some large thing done up in matting, from a rupture in which appeared the likeness of a grey horse's head.

Next came another man, who bore in one hand, or, rather, between one arm and cheek, a shapeless brown paper parcel, in the other a beautiful three-masted, undisguised ship. Lastly followed a tall, spare gentleman, with a stoop in his shoulders, an eye-glass in his eye, and a small carpet-bag in his hand. It might have been a European traveller approaching the court of a semi-civilized king, with propitiatory presents—but it was not; it was a bachelor uncle and godfather, whose ideas concerning the obligations imposed upon him by those relations were vague, and knowledge of children vaguer—drawing near a nephew and godson, to whom, as well as to his mother, he desired to do his duty, so far as he could discover what that was.

It was not often that he came into contact with his brother's widow and her encumbrance, and he did not look forward to such occasions with much delight, being a man who liked his ease and his bachelor habits, and who did not

push the virtue of self-denial to any exaggerated limits. Women and children were rather a puzzle to him; he could not make out what would interest them, and so took refuge, as a general rule, in trying to amuse those into whose society he was unprofessionally brought. But he was forbidden this resource in the present instance, being firmly persuaded that, at the slightest show of levity, his sister-in-law would fall at his feet in strong convulsions. This awkwardness arose principally from the great love Horace Bathurst had borne his brother, and his consequent strong desire to be kind to his widow and child, which placed him much in the position of a cat trying to show her affection for a hedgehog; he was always afraid of running against some unforeseen frickle, and felt in Mrs. Bathurst's presence as if he were in church; while, to sleep in her house, was a real penance, as he always, on awaking in the morning, experienced a sensation as if there were a corpse

on the premises, whose interment was to be the occupation of the day. Two serious questions occupied his mind as he walked along the gravel path. How should he address his sister-in-law—as *Mrs. Bathurst*, or *Emily?* Should he embrace the bambino? He decided to be ruled by circumstances, *i.e.*, the demeanour of the former, and the cleanliness of the latter.

Mrs. Bathurst met him at the door, and the aspect of so many toys for her son softened her manner to that extent, that she got called by her Christian name on the spot. The boy was not present, and so the question with respect to him was adjourned.

William Bathurst, having parted from his little friends, hid himself, as I said, like our bashful progenitor, among the trees of the garden, and watched the arrivals with throbbing heart. One parcel was hopeful, and another doubtful; but the ship must surely be a toy, and his uncle could not well want it for him-

self. It was also extremely unlikely that a sedate person like his mother should indulge in juvenile aquatics. No, it was evident that Uncle Horace intended to act towards him like a relation, a godfather, and a gentleman ; and the ship was his. Susan the maid found him revolving these questions, and carried him off to be washed and brushed ; so that when, at length, he was introduced into the drawing-room, he was pretty kissing for a princess.

"Dear me!" cried Mr. Horace, whose boyish associations were not of so sweet and unsoiled a nature. "How nice it is! Why, I declare, it might be a girl! And, ah! how very singular! that is, of course, I suppose, it might be expected, but how very much it reminded me of my poor brother just now. The nose, of course, is different—it is not old enough to have a nose yet; but its eyes and mouth are just like his. Well, Billy, my boy, don't be shy. There is something in the hall there which may amuse you. I

have brought it a toy or so from London, Emily, if you don't object!"

"Object? Oh! on the contrary, I am only too grateful for your kindness. You cannot please a mother better than by taking notice of her child," said Mrs. Bathurst, smiling.

"Hum, that is worth remembering," said Mr. Horace, to himself. "Well, then," he added aloud, "there is a ship which has just sailed into this port, Billy."

"Your uncle speaks metaphorically, William; of course a ship could not sail along a road where there is no water!"

"I should like to see the ship," said Willy, curiosity and his uncle's *bonhomie* overcoming his shyness.

"Come along then, my lad," said Mr. Horace rising, and they all three adjourned to the hall.

The ship was indeed a wonderful and delectable affair, with a real keel and a real rudder, which would positively steer the vessel, which

was to the boy an extraordinary thing for a rudder to do; and real sails, which might be hoisted or lowered with real ropes, by means of real blocks; and a real deck, below which was a real black hold, as might be proved by lifting up one of the hatchways.

When the interest in this wonderful piece of naval architecture began to flag, a rocking horse was stripped of matting and discovered.

"Is this for me too!" cried William, in an ecstasy of delight.

"Yes, that is for you too. I thought, Emily, that it would make a nice exercise for it on a wet day. The man in the shop also told me that rocking was not so noisy as other childish games, which I should think would be an advantage on those occasions when it is confined by weather to the house."

The boy had his first ride upon the spot.

"It occurred to me," said Mr. Horace again, when William had well learned how to rock his horse backwards and forwards, and free-

ing another parcel from a great many brown paper envelopes as he spoke—"it occurred to me that, as you were a person who went in—or rather, I should say, who thought very seriously upon religious matters, and as I am myself, I believe, in some way responsible for the lad's orthodoxy, that it would be better that all his presents should not be of a secular character; and so I have brought him a Noah's Ark. I think you will find that the figures are more like the animals they profess to represent than they used to be in the days of our youth. Perhaps this might be reserved as a Sunday toy."

It is utterly impossible to attempt to depict the expression of horror which Mrs. Bathurst's face here assumed.

"Ah! well, well," continued the old peace-at-any-price time-server, "I thought it might be made subservient to instruction in the Old Testament history; but no doubt you are right, it is better not to allow anything which

might possibly conduce to cheerfulness or recreation on the Sunday."

The Noah's Ark, which was the largest *then* known—for they have been increasing ever since, and will grow to the size of the original soon—was much admired, and then this indefatigable uncle produced a small brass cannon.

"This used to be my favourite sort of plaything when I was a boy," said he. "The harder you ram it down, Billy, the louder the bang!"

"What! Do you mean to say that it is a real cannon?" cried Mrs. Bathurst.

"Yes, and here is some real gunpowder too," he added, taking a small packet of that combustible out of his pocket.

But the tender mother, doubtful about the cannon, put her decided veto upon the powder passing into her boy's possession. The former was finally given over to him, blocked up with cork and paper, but the latter was thrown

away; and so with his gun spiked and his ammunition convoy cut off, any artilleristic talents which may have lain dormant in William Bathurst's head were fated never to be developed. The thought of this did not distress him, however, and the day was one of blissful wonders, to be marked with a white stone for ever. The presents were delightful; his uncle, with an eye-glass which he kept in his eye by a conjuring trick, was delightful; and the change in the routine of the household habits was eminently delightful. For Mrs. Bathurst, who led the most retired life imaginable, had fallen into nursery habits, and was now worried considerably by her desire to receive her guest with proper hospitality.

Thus the late dinner, from which he was excluded, and which consequently became mysterious—the elaborate dessert, to which he was admitted—the wine, to his previous experience a rare article, one glass of which was

taken in the performance of a rite on birthdays, and other such grand occasions, but which this wonderful uncle drank as you would tea, in the most careless and unimpressed manner—all was strange. But the climax was to come. After a while, Uncle Horace, remarking that it was a fine evening, expressed a wish for a turn in the garden, and proposed to him, William Bathurst, to come with him. He took him up first into his bedroom, where there were all sorts of interesting and unknown instruments on the dressing-table, and changed his coat, and they then strolled out, and Uncle Horace did this: He took out of the pocket of the coat he had just put on, a leather case, which was seen, when opened, to contain certain cylindrical brown things, something like sticks of chocolate. One of these he took in his left hand, and then replacing the case, he produced the smallest knife William had ever seen, and with it pricked the end of the brown thing,

which he then put in his mouth. After this, from another pocket, he took a silver box, which proved to contain small fireworks, one of which he let off and applied, while yet fizzing, to the other end of the brown thing, at which he commenced to suck vigorously. The brown thing ignited, and gave out a great deal of light blue smoke, which Uncle Horace continued to draw into his mouth and puff out again, so long as the brown thing lasted, filling the air thereby with the most delicious aromatic odour.

He, William, was drawn out in the meanwhile to talk freely about himself and his plans; the extent of his acquirements, the nature of his amusements, the games he had with the little Johnstones—all was unreservedly told. It is true that he withheld the fact of his devoted attachment to Mary Johnstone, and the marriage engagement which had passed between them; but then that was a delicate subject to touch upon,



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and, besides, was not his own secret. He gathered boldness, however, to ask his uncle two questions, the precursors of a legion which followed on the morrow.

"Why do you do that, uncle?"

"What?—smoke?—because I like it, my boy."

Satisfactory, though not explanatory.

"Why do you call me '*it*'?"

Horace Bathurst stopped short in his walk.

"Bless me!—observes!" he muttered, and ruminated for some minutes. "Why, you see, Billy," he replied at length, "you have grown up into such a big boy since I last saw you; but when you were a little chap, I could never remember whether you were a boy or a girl, and so I called you *it*, which would do for either. But I will give you your sex in future, if I think of it."

By the time the cigar was finished it was dusk, so they went in; and when Mr. Horace

had rechanged his coat, they repaired to the drawing-room, where they found Mrs. Bathurst and candles. Presently tea came in; and when it was drunk and cleared away, the beneficent uncle produced yet another miraculous present, consisting of several round pieces of cardboard, with figures upon them of little boys in swings, and little girls with skipping-ropes, and men on horseback; and when these were fixed to a holder which pierced them in the centre, upon which they could be made, by a turn of the finger, to revolve rapidly, and held before a looking-glass, the person who looked at the reflection through certain holes pierced round the edge of the cardboard, seemed to see the boys swinging, the girls skipping, and the men galloping, which was a phenomenon perfectly bewildering.

However, this wonderful day came to an end at last, and William went to bed an hour after his usual time; and as it was

Saturday night, his mother felt terrible qualms of conscience lest so many novelties should distract the boy's attention from his religious exercises on the morrow. And indeed her fears were well-grounded.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE FIRST STEP OUT OF CHILDHOOD DISCUSSED.

Mr. Horace Bathurst had come down from London with the intention of staying from the Saturday till the Tuesday, that so he might have time and opportunity for a due observation of his nephew before giving his final opinion as to what course it would be wise to adopt with reference to the boy's education.

Now he was a cautious man, with lamentably few prejudices, and a cool reason, which, enabling him to see clearly the *pros* and *cons* of every question, gave him a great deal of trouble in arriving at conclusions, which more

impulsive and less rational men would have jumped at at once. In his profession, this disposition led him to take counsel's opinion on a profusion of points upon which he was himself perfectly competent to decide; and in private life he was always glad to throw the responsibility of decision upon anybody's shoulders who would bear it. He was, therefore, much relieved by a note which was brought on Saturday evening to Mrs. Bathurst from Mr. Johnstone, saying that he had heard from his wife that Mrs. Bathurst wished to know some particulars concerning the school to which he intended to send his son Harry; and that if she would give him some breakfast on Monday morning, he would defer his journey up to town for an omnibus or two, and would afford Mr. Horace Bathurst every information in his power.

I regret to say that the intervening Sunday was contemplated with a feeling almost amounting to dread by the last-named gentle-

man. When he got up early in the morning, and reflected upon the number of hours which must elapse before it would be time to go to bed again, his heart fairly sank within him, and he considered whether a colic might not be a good thing; but remembering the fuss that would be made if he declared himself ill, he determined to brave it out, and go downstairs at once.

A man could hardly be solemnized to death in one day, however long it might be; and yet, when he entered the breakfast-room and greeted his sister-in-law, he thought it possible; for she had got her Sunday gown, Sunday cap, Sunday mittens, Sunday manners on, and affected the beholder, in a minor degree, like the Gorgon's head. The bread also was stale, and stale bread was one of Mr. Horace's pet aversions. But his great difficulty was to know what to talk about, secular questions being quite tabooed, and religion being ticklish ground, as he did not quite

know the exact distinctive tenets of the sect she belonged to; and if interrogated on the subject, could only have replied with the orthodox soldier who was much disgusted at finding that his colonel was strict but irregular in religion, that she was "a Papist, or Methodist, or Atheist, or something of that sort."

Another thing which perplexed this poor fish, who found himself so very much out of his accustomed water, was the baptismal engagement he had formerly entered into on behalf of his nephew, and which he had an idea was connected with some customary proceeding independent of the presentation of a silver mug.

At length his face brightened, and, thinking he had hit it, he suddenly exclaimed:

"I should like to hear Billy his catechism."

"Well, to tell the truth, I fancy that he has forgotten it," replied Mrs. Bathurst;

"for I have not encouraged him to learn it lately. Mr. Pogram, the minister under whom I sit, does not approve of the Church Catechism, as he considers that it contains the doctrine of baptismal regeneration."

"Oh, indeed, I beg pardon. The Collect, then—pshaw! how stupid I am! Of course you will not approve of a collect? Well, then, the Creed—you do not disagree with that? The Lord's Prayer—that must be all right, surely; and the Ten Commandments? Mr. Pogram has no particular objection to the Ten Commandments? Very good. Billy, come here, and say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, in the vulgar tongue."

Billy was not very fluent with the first and third, and so his mother suggested the propriety of his saying half a dozen hymns, which he did with great rapidity and precision, only, as most of them were in the same metre, he occasionally transplanted lines from one to

another, which did not tend to make the meaning less obscure.

When it seemed to Mr. Horace that the day had lasted about a week, his sister-in-law looked at her watch—hurriedly, and as if it were not quite a correct thing to do on the Sunday—and announced that it was past ten, and time to go and get ready for chapel, supposing that her visitor would go to the church. But he said no, he would accompany her; for he thought he might as well do the thing thoroughly for once, now he was in for it; and he was rather curious to hear what sort of preacher this was, who had gained such influence over her mind. But

> "His heart grew sick with the nonsense and stuff of it,
> And saying like Eve, when she ate the apple,
> 'I wanted a taste, and here there's enough of it!'
> I flung out——"

No; he did not "fling out of the little chapel," like Mr. Browning, because that would have been rude to his sister-in-law, but he would have done so if he had been alone.

For the preacher, having neither education nor genius, was obliged to trust to mannerism, and veil his ignorance and shallowness by a torrent of conventional phrases and expressions, which, to unaccustomed ears, were perfectly impious. I do not think that poor Mr. Pogram was a hypocrite—all oil and cant without, and a sneer within—but certainly his style was calculated to give a refined stranger that impression.

For an educated and intelligent mind to hear doctrines, which it is in the habit of approaching with veneration and awe, made the pegs on which to hang strained sophisms, vulgar quibbles, and irreverent dogmatisms, is so loathsome an infliction, that tolerance becomes a difficult virtue to exercise, until reflection points out that, as education and refinement lessen the demand for cant, the supply will, in like proportion, diminish; for in religion and politics, as well as commerce, great is Free Trade.

Mr. Horace Bathurst felt that he could not stand a second help of Pogram; and so he walked over to Kew in the afternoon, and let his sister-in-law, and her son, go to the chapel without him, much to her regret, for the sermon was of so stirring a nature, that she considered that it must have had some awakening effect upon him, as even Billy was not half so sleepy as usual, and only required a poke occasionally. It did not occur to her that the lad was thinking of those mundane toys which had been heaped upon him in such profusion the day before.

When Mr. Horace returned from his walk, it was dinner time; and the severity of the meal was tempered by the sensual gratification of blunting a very sharp appetite, and another turn in the garden afterwards, with his nephew and cigar, wiled away an hour in a manner at least as grateful to the boy as to the man; for it was an amusing thing to see how the sick-monkey expression, which had drawn

down the corners of his mouth all day, changed suddenly to his week-day look of childish joyousness directly Master Billy got out of the maternal sight and hearing.

After tea, however, the appearance of things in general was enough to give anyone, with whose constitution moral pickles do not agree, the indigestion and blue devils for a week. Mrs. Bathurst sat at the table bolt upright, reading a work by some Scotch divine, who had devoted his cheerful existence to the endeavour to establish the joyous doctrine that the great majority of human beings, say nine hundred thousand nine hundred out of every million were predestined to everlasting torment from all eternity; and the expression of her face was such as one would expect to see on that of a kind-hearted person contemplating such a scheme of Providence.

As reading seemed to be the order of the evening, Mr. Horace went to the library, and fetched one of his poor brother's favourite

books, which he settled himself down to peruse.

"What are you reading, Uncle Horace?" asked Billy, who had got the fidgets, and judged physiognomically that his uncle's studies were of a lighter cast than his mother's.

"A volume of sermons, Billy."

"Whose sermons?"

"Those of the Rev. Lawrence Sterne."

"Do not interrupt your uncle, William," cried Mrs. Bathurst.

But Billy, who had detected a decided twinkle in the avuncular eye, and a humorous twitch of the avuncular mouth, was curious to see the sermon which produced such unwonted effects; so he stole unperceived behind Mr. Horace's chair, and peeped over his shoulder.

Presently he burst into a shout of laughter, which produced a most fearful jar on the nerves of his mother, wound up as they were to Calvinistic pitch.

"William!" she cried. "Laughing on the Sabbath! Oh! you wicked, wicked boy! go to bed at once, sir!"

"It was something in my book, Emily, which tickled his fancy," said Mr. Horace, in extenuation. "The phrases of these old divines are sometimes very quaint, and no doubt——"

"You are very kind to excuse him; but it is nearly his bed-time, and as he is in a giddy humour, he had better go off at once."

And the uncle, thinking it would be slight penance, indeed, to the lad to get out of the room, said no more.

What made the boy laugh I do not exactly know. But as the edition of Sterne which Mr. Horace was reading contained all that author's works bound in one volume, it is just possible that the leaves may have inadvertently turned over from the sermons to Tristram Shandy.

In whatever way Mr. Horace Bathurst be-

guiled the evening, he did get rid of it at last; and when he turned into bed with a sigh of relief, he felt that he would deserve, and be willing to undergo, any mortal calamity, if he ever spent another Sunday under that roof.

When he came down in the morning, he found the stiff and pompous Mr. Johnstone talking to Mrs. Bathurst. She introduced him.

"Proud and happy, I am sure, to make the acquaintance of so near a connexion of my inestimable neighbour and friend," said Mr. Johnstone, slewing his whole body round till he faced the new comer, and then gravely bowing, like a polite goose with a stiff neck.

Mr. Bathurst, with his eye-glass in his eye, bowed in return, and began to wonder whether poor calumniated Falstaff's men in buckram were not realities after all, and whether their descendants had not colonized in Acton.

Covered by the skirmishing of a few com-

monplace sentences, the two men took note of each other. Mr. Johnstone came to the immediate conclusion that Mr. Bathurst was a gentleman to his hair and finger nails, and also perceived that he himself had made a contrary impression on the other, but hoped by self-assertion to impose upon him yet—a mistake often made by men whose manners have been neglected, who cannot understand that modesty is the highest form of pride, and therefore never vulgar. Whatever the disadvantages an able man who has raised himself may have been subjected to in early life, he can become as elegant a gentleman as any in Europe if he understands that fact; if he does not, he may take what pains, frequent what company, and occupy what position he chooses, a snob he will be to the end of his days.

"I understand," said Mr. Bathurst, when enough had passed for preface, "that you are about to send your son, a lad of about

my nephew's age, to a school of which you have a very good opinion, and you have kindly offered to give us the benefit of your information."

"Yes, ye—es," replied Mr. Johnstone, with pompous pause upon the affirmative monosyllable; "but I must warn you that my ideas on the subject of education are peculiar—most of my ideas on the majority of subjects are, I believe, peculiar. I daresay, now, that you do not disapprove of fagging?"

"On the contrary," replied Mr. Bathurst; "I am an Eton fellow myself, and have therefore had practical experience of the working of the system. To act in a quasi-servile position for a short time makes a boy think, teaches him the valuable lesson of the beauty of subordination, and brings home to him the fact that it is only a happy fortune, and the possession by his parents of a certain income, which makes the difference between himself and his servants; and he learns how greatly

they add to his comfort, what self-denial and self-restraint they must constantly exercise, and how much therefore he owes them. I can generally tell a public school man by the way he treats his dependants."

"Exactly," said Mr. Johnstone. "And I daresay you have no objection to flogging."

"Not I!" exclaimed the other; "you must punish a boy somehow when he will not study, and it is downright cruelty to keep him in, stupefying himself over his unlearned lessons, instead of taking the air and exercise which is necessary for his health; give him a whipping and have done with it, I should say."

"And fighting?"

"Why, of course it would be more Christian for boys not to quarrel at all, but if they do, it is far better for them to fight it out and make friends, than to bear malice as men and women do. I am not sure that it would not be conducive to morality to have a permanent twenty-four foot ring established

in every parish in England, for the fistal arrangements of even adult differences: such a custom would ruin *me*, though."

"If Mrs. Bathurst's views upon the subject of education agree with yours, sir," observed Mr. Johnstone, "I am afraid that my school will not suit at all."

"But they do not," cried Mrs. Bathurst, quite energetically for her. "I have no doubt, Horace, that your system is a good one for many boys; but you do not know William. As for what you said about fagging, I do not see the advantages, as I highly disapprove of familiarity with the lower orders. If I thought the poor dear child was going to be flogged, I should break my heart, I am sure; and I know he would never get over it—he is so tender, and requires to be lead by kindness, not driven by severity; and as for fighting, how can you talk so calmly about anything so frightful and wicked? I once saw a boy who had been fighting, and he had—

it is quite true, I assure you, and he was not older than William—a—a black eye! I was never so shocked in my life. I should never have a moment's peace if I thought my child was exposed to such a calamity."

Breakfast was now ready, and during the pause which accompanied the commencement of the meal, Mr. Horace Bathurst reflected that the sentiments of the mother and the character of the boy made it more than ever desirable that he should be sent to a good school, where his character would be formed upon a model different from hers; but he knew the uselessness of reasoning against a mother's feelings, and so, under protest, he yielded.

Some men would have felt offended at being asked to come, at great personal inconvenience, to give their advice upon a point which the person seeking counsel had previously settled; but Uncle Horace was so glad to shirk the responsibility which attaches to giving the

educational bias to a human soul, that he felt rather relieved than otherwise at his recommendations being neglected.

"Well," he said, good-naturedly, "you have settled finally against me what sort of school Billy is *not* to go to; the only thing which remains to be decided, as we are all happily agreed that it would never do for him to be brought up at home, is, where he *is* to go. What is this place you recommend, Mr. Johnstone?"

"It is called the Honeywood Collegiate Establishment; and the principal's name is Dr. Beebee. But I much regret that I have no time to give you more minute particulars, as I am positively obliged to proceed to London by this next omnibus, which will be due, I perceive, in five minutes. If, however, you will honour me with your company at dinner, this evening, we will discuss the matter over as good a glass of wine as you will get anywhere."

Mr. Johnstone was not exactly the sort of host Uncle Horace would have chosen, so he demurred, and said something about the short time he was with his sister-in-law, and his not wishing to leave her.

"There is no need," replied Mr. Johnstone, "as I took it for granted that Mrs. Bathurst would come to keep my wife company, and bring her boy to play with his little friends. Adieu, then, till five. No ceremony."

And he took his departure, an earlier one than he originally intended; but when he saw Uncle Horace, he recognised him as a man whom he had seen on several occasions riding or walking in rather aristocratic society, and thought that it might forward his own ulterior views to force himself into a certain intimacy with him; and so he laid an ambush, and surprised him into coming to dine with him.

Having time to reflect, and being no longer

supported by the self-confident figure of Mr. Johnstone, Mrs. Bathurst felt, in the course of the day, that she had hardly given Uncle Horace's opinions due weight; and after lunch, when Billy was trying his new ship in a large tank there was in the garden, while his elders were sauntering slowly along the meandering path, Uncle Horace giving his companion a lucid and popular account of some revolution with which the Parisians were amusing themselves just then, she suddenly said,

"Do you think William would have sent him to a public school?"

"What! Louis Blanc?"

"No, no, pardon me for being so *distrait;* but I can think of nothing else but my boy. I am afraid you must think me very weak for dreading so much the ordeal which all boys have to go through, and for wishing it to be as mild as possible!"

"Not at all, Emily; I know too well what that ordeal is, not to sympathise with the mother who shrinks at it."

"But you have not answered my question. What would his father have done?"

"Since you ask me, Emily, I must tell the truth. I think, nay, I am sure, that he would have agreed with me."

"But they are so very godless at public schools, are they not?" said the poor lady, much distressed. "They swear, and use fearful language, and practise all sorts of wickedness. What do I know? If his poor father had been alive, he would have been able to have advised him, warned him, guided. him; but I am ignorant of all these things, and my advice, my warning, would be unpractical, and therefore ineffective. It would have been different if William had been here, would it not?"

"It wou—ou——dear me; a fly in the corner of my eye. It would, indeed, have made a very great difference, and I dare say you are right. Only I have an idea that private schools are, in reality, more vicious than public ones."

"Oh! but this one is an exception, it is so beautifully managed, you can't think! But you will hear this evening."

"Granting that," continued Uncle Horace, waving a point upon which he felt extremely sceptical, "the boy must go out into the world, and fight his own battle against evil some day. The question is as to the best training for that conflict."

"He is such a very tender-hearted boy," said Mrs. Bathurst; "so easily led either towards good or evil, that you must not judge of him as you would of others. I expect to be able to keep him under my own eye and influence after he has left school."

"What! when he is articled to me?"

"Yes."

"When he is a man grown, and in business for himself?"

"Yes."

Uncle Horace remained for some time in silent and astounded contemplation of an

apron-string of such length and strength. At last he said :

"We are mortal, Emily, and going down the hill which he is ascending."

"True," she replied. "But I trust God will spare me to see him married young to a woman of firm character and affectionate disposition, who——"

"Good gracious!" cried Uncle Horace, at this further lengthening and strengthening of the soft but tough bond, which was thus destined to enslave the unconscious innocent who was dabbling in the tank before them; this plagiary of the old French cry, "The apron-string is worn out; long last the apron-string!" "You have mapped out his life for him pretty accurately, Emily. But suppose we are both taken before your plans are matured, will not the lad be left in rather a defenceless state?"

"Ah! Horace, we whose minds have undergone a saving change, have hope and faith!"

"Well, I do not think that I am quite destitute of those virtues myself, to a rational extent. If I sow a field with beans, I should sleep quite calmly of nights in faith and hope that the Almighty would give me in proper time a good crop. But of beans, not oaks; for that I must sow acorns. But, however," he added, with a smile, "I am an old bachelor, you know, and cannot be expected to have that confidence in female influence which I should doubtless have experienced had I ever tested it."

A little before five o'clock they were all three at Griffin Hall, where Mr. Johnstone, who had returned from town earlier than usual, met them at the gate, and fastened upon his guest-victim.

"Come here, sir," said he, leading Uncle Horace to a particular corner of the gravel walk, from which he directed his attention to the house. "From this point you get a view of the whole range. Magnificent style, sir, is

it not? My own idea entirely. What a pity, now, that that architectural idea should have been worked out on a cottage instead of a pile—is it not, sir? What a noble pile it would have made! You see the griffins, the arms of my ancestors; you may have read of the Johnstones—the family with an *e;* they were very famous in the Border warfare; many a time has the rampant griffin carried dismay into town and hamlet. I often think how my forefathers would blush if they knew that their descendant was in any way connected with commerce; and yet, sir, the position held by the British merchant is a noble and a proud one."

And so, praising himself and everything connected, or supposed to be connected with him, he led the way to the house, where, in the finest-proportioned and best-furnished room in the world, Uncle Horace was introduced to the lady of the house; and then they went in to dinner, and had some fish which a

marquis had been just too late to secure, some lamb which an earl was pining after, some hock which was only possessed by Prince Metternich and Mr. Johnstone, and other eatables and drinkables, all unobtainable by anybody but that gifted and indefatigable individual who sat at the foot of the table. So that Uncle Horace was much perplexed.

"Come," he said to himself, "Emily *is* a lady, and *not* a fool; how can she believe in such a vulgar humbug as this?"

But he dismissed the question as part of the problem Woman, which he always classed with squaring the circle, perpetual motion, and the transmutation of metals, "things which no fellow can understand."

Almost directly after the dessert was put on the table the two ladies left the room, to give plenty of time for the free discussion of the educational question before the house.

"Taste that Lafitte," said Mr. Johnstone, pushing a tidy Bordeaux wine, desecrated to

suit the English palate by a load of Burgundy, across the table. "If you are a judge of claret, I think you will tell me that there is no better wine than that on the Queen's own table."

"I never dined with her," said Uncle Horace, drily.

"Well, now, about this school," pursued Mr. Johnstone. "I must confess to you that my ideas upon the subject of education are peculiar. I do not think much of the old-fashioned system of teaching boys nothing but Latin and Greek—what is the use of it? Why fix upon two dead languages to be crammed into a boy's memory, when there are so many living ones, which he would find it in after life convenient to know?"

"Because those ancient languages, forming the foundations of the modern ones, a boy, in mastering them, acquires an amount of elementary and grammatical knowledge which renders the picking up afterwards of French,

Italian, or German comparative child's play. Also because the study of a dead language cultivates the reasoning faculties, while learning a modern one merely exercises the memory, and sharpens a certain knack of catching idioms."

When a person with whom Mr. Johnstone was taking a conversational paddle got out of Mr. Johnstone's depth, that gentleman used to smile compassionately, elevate his shoulders and eyebrows, and—hold his tongue; thereby leaving it to be inferred that politeness alone deterred him from the utter demolition of his opponent.

Uncle Horace saw through the transparent manœuvre, and not caring to throw his rhetorical pearls before swine, he tried back.

"Well, and what do they teach at Honeywood instead of the Classics?" said he.

"They do not entirely abstain from the pursuit of those old-fashioned studies, but they do not prosecute them to the neglect of

science. Botany, chemistry, mineralogy, conchology, elocution, political economy, French, German, Italian, Spanish, music, dancing, mathematics, are a few of the studies which occur to me at the moment as those to which the attention of the pupils is principally directed."

"Good heavens! And you mean to tell me that they drive all that into a lad without any use of the birch?"

"Corporal punishment is unknown, as well as envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness."

"It must be monstrous dull!" said Uncle Horace, drily.

"The boys do not seem to find it so," replied Mr. Johnstone. "The school is out Chiswick way; if you can find time to run down there any day, it is not far, and you will be able to judge for yourself. To see them playing at cricket in their large fields, you would not say they were dull."

"Cricket? Come, it is not so bad, perhaps, after all. No, no more wine, thank you; I should like to take a turn in your garden, and, if I may be permitted, to smoke a cigar."

"Certainly. I do not often smoke myself, but I have some regalias here which came direct from the Havannah, and cost half-a-crown a piece out there; you cannot get such in England, offer what price you may. Try one."

During their turn in the garden, Mr. Johnstone explained what he knew further of Honeywood and Dr. Beebee, and Uncle Horace saw that the place might have its advantages for a very young boy—for, at all events, they were kindly treated.

"And yet, Mr. Johnstone," he said, on closing the question for the present by throwing away the stump of his cigar, and preparing to enter the house, "you may depend upon one thing, a school which calls itself a 'Collegiate Establishment,' with a 'principal,' instead of

a head master, has something rotten about it somewhere."

And these words hit Mr. Johnstone, who had been caught by the title simply, rather hard.

Going home that evening, Mrs. Bathurst eagerly asked her brother-in-law what he thought of the school.

"I think it will do very well, *perhaps*, while Billy is a little boy, though I don't fancy a lad would get much good there after thirteen. However, I will run over and look at it, or, better, I will call one day next week, and we will go together and see if our opinions agree with Mr. Johnstone's."

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE FIRST STEP OUT OF CHILDHOOD TAKEN.

Honeywood Collegiate Establishment took Mrs. Bathurst's heart at once by storm. Dr. Beebee seemed so utterly incapable of harming any living being, that one wondered what would happen if a flea ever chanced to alight on his excessively clean person ; for to imagine that he would ever have recourse to unkind measures for its removal was quite out of the question.

Miss Beebee, his sister, who had especial charge of the young ones, was a nice motherly body ; the ush—the " assistant masters," were

mild, gentlemanly-looking men; and the boys themselves were clean, neat, brushed, rosy, plump, and happy. Evidently next to stopping at home, the best thing which could happen to her William would be to go to such a school as that. But her endeavours to get a hearty approval of the "Collegiate Establishment" out of Uncle Horace were futile.

"It is better than his remaining at home, certainly," was all the praise he would give, and that the mother did not consider very complimentary.

"It may be that you are right"—this was his ultimatum on the subject—"and that I am wrong; but the fact is, that we go upon entirely distinct principles. I would secure a child against drowning by teaching it to swim, you by never letting it go near the water."

"And is not my plan the surest?"

"If practicable, yes."

"I have no doubt you are right in a general

way ; but William is not like other boys, he is so, &c."

When a mother gets on that tack, you may put on your hat and gloves.

Altogether it was a settled thing that, in the following August, William Bathurst should go to school with Harry Johnstone ; and the two boys looked forward with pleasure to the event, as children always do to any change while it is at a distance ; and poor little Mary thought how dull she would be when deprived at one blow of her brother and small sweetheart, and left with no companions but her mother and her doll—the former grown up, and the latter speechless. But, as if on purpose to meet the exigencies of her position, one evening her papa came home later than usual, and brought with him an immense quantity of luggage, a little girl of about her own age, and a black woman. And Harry and Mary were informed that the little girl was named Minnie Cook, and that they were

to treat her as a sister—which they did, having big hearts, with very little trouble.

An independent little dame was Miss Minnie, not at all oppressed with shyness; she had evidently been accustomed to a great deal of waiting upon, and took all the attention paid her as perfectly natural. Her pale face and large eyes made her look very delicate; and an air of languor, not natural at her age, did not tend to remove the impression. She did not enter very readily into the more active games of her new playmates at first, and looked on with much wonder at the mysteries of bat and trap, hoop trundling, and the other contrivances of British infancy for impeding degeneracy; but at doll-nursing and all sedentary amusements she proved a great hand; and if Harry thought his new sister rather a spooney, Mary was charmed with her to a degree which excited much jealousy in the breast of William Bathurst.

The black woman was a great mystery, the

two little Johnstones having a sort of impression, which was not exactly a tangible belief, that all the money which they were perpetually being incited to put into missionary boxes was collected for her advantage; and indeed they were able to understand that the conversion of anyone so very ugly must cost a deal of money. Their prejudices against the good-natured Hindu soon wore out, however; and when, on the approach of autumn, she sailed for Madras, there being nothing now to take her back to China, they were almost as sorry to part with her as was little Minnie herself.

The arrival of this little girl brought Uncle Horace once more to Mr. Johnstone's house; for he had been an old school and college friend of Mr. Cook's, and felt drawn to go and see the motherless child who had been sent to England under such sad circumstances. And this visit gave Mr. Johnstone an idea that he might use his "ward," as he called

her, as a means of advancing himself a little in the social scale, for both Mr. Cook and his late wife had been well-connected people, who had left friends behind them in that class of gentry amongst whom it was Mr. Johnstone's particular desire to be ranked; and indeed, shortly after Uncle Horace's second visit, one of the upper Acton families, who had hitherto ignored the Johnstones, called upon them, and Mr. Johnstone began to talk about his religious views being a sort of heirloom handed down to him from the seventeenth century, when his family had espoused the Puritan cause; and to say that he himself was liberal in feeling, and had no enmity to the Church of England; and to treat poor Mr. Pogram with marked coldness. For, he said to himself, who knows but that, if I attended his church, the rector might call —and the rector's wife's cousin had married a man whose cousin's wife was related to a baronet.

The early summer passed, and there came a

hot August Monday morning, upon which an open hired carriage, having by the side of the driver a brass-headed, nail-studded trunk and a square deal box, both articles strongly corded, and neatly placarded with minute directions as to their ownership and destination, and Mr. Johnstone and his son Harry in the interior, stopped at Mrs. Bathurst's house. Before the bell could be rung, a female servant, who had evidently been crying, and a youth who looked as if he was anxious to console her, came out, bearing between them another trunk and another box, which were piled up on the first; and then William Bathurst made his appearance—a very crumpled and be-blubbered one—and got into the carriage.

"Tell Mrs. Bathurst that I will call this evening and inform her how I left the young gentlemen. To Chiswick," said Mr. Johnstone, and the carriage drove away.

Between the two laths of a Venetian blind,

Mrs. Bathurst watched it until it was out of sight, and then she knelt down and prayed.

The carriage rolled on through dusty by-roads for about an hour, and then came to a large mansion, which had been once a palace, and was situated in a very pretty and quiet spot, surrounded by fields and farm-yards and market-gardens, and approached by a shady lane lined on either side by tall elms, whose branches met overhead. Mr. Johnstone, who delighted to hear himself talk, especially when he had auditors whom he could patronise, and a theme which admitted of flowery language, pointed out the home beauties of the landscape to the boys, who paid about as much attention to them as a couple of minnows would to the decoration of an aquarium into which they were turned, with the knowledge that a voracious perch was lying hid somewhere behind the rockwork. The leafy avenue was to them like the awful wood in which Dante finds himself in the opening of the Inferno; the iron

gates like those gloomy portals where visitors, who had already left their umbrellas with their styx behind them, had to deposit their hopes; the bell, which in truth had a very cheerful tone, like that with which it is still the custom to jar the nerves of the dying out of compliment to the dead; the light, bright, airy study, into which they were ushered, like the torture-chamber of a dentist. Even the entrance of Dr. Beebee did not set them entirely at their ease, and yet his appearance was sufficient, one would have thought, to reassure anybody. He was a tall portly man, with a high shining forehead and a bright restless eye, whose whole face and figure expressed benevolence in letters which beggars and impostors of all kinds could read a hundred yards off.

"And these are my lit—tle friends?" said Dr. Beebee, after the first exchange of salutations with Mr. Johnstone. "Good boys I am sure they will be, and anxious to learn a very

great deal. This is William Bathurst, I think; well, William, and how is your mamma? Ah! here is Miss Beebee. Dorothea, you remember Mrs. Bathurst, with whom you struck up so sudden a friendship? This is her son."

Miss Beebee was a homely old lady, who worshipped her brother, wore spectacles, and had several other virtuous or innocuous qualities, and only one vicious one, which was that she did not always aspirate the letter *h* so clearly as her position rendered desirable.

After a little further conversation, and a "slight refection," as, to Mr. Johnstone's delight, Dr. Beebee termed it, of fruit and wine, the model schoolmaster led the way into the dining-hall, which was not, like most rooms set apart for the meals of a large number of boys, girls, or men, an uncomfortable, unfurnished apartment, but was thickly carpeted and handsomely curtained, and had at one end a large glass case, in which were all sorts of che-

mical, mechanical, and electrical apparatus. Over the mantelpiece there was fixed an immense board, painted into different compartments, white at the top, then red, then blue, and black at the bottom. This board was full of holes, and stuck all over with little pegs, each of which bore a number.

"This is our character-board, and constitutes our system of reward and punishment—good conduct and industry elevate to the white, evil behaviour and idleness depress to the black. Every boy has his peg, which he keeps during the whole period of his stay. See, I take two fresh ones from this drawer. You, Harry Johnstone, are No. 45—you, William Bathurst, No. 26. I place you both in the exact centre of the board, which is the bottom row of the red, and I hope you will soon soar into the white."

"And never 'ave the misfortune to get into the black!" added Miss Beebee, shaking her head, as if the very thought of the calamities

attending such a position caused her to shudder.

The party was next ushered into the schoolroom, a very large, lofty building, having a platform with an organ at one end, and maps and mechanical drawings delineated on the walls. At last Mr. Johnstone took his departure, and the two new-comers were turned into the human lake, to find their level.

A very calm, peaceful lake was the Honeywood, or, rather, a pond in which the carp-like inhabitants sailed quietly round and round, without any trout-like jumps or pikeish rushes; and though some of them, amongst whom was Harry Johnstone, might at times experience a restless desire to disport themselves in less stagnant waters, William Bathurst was perfectly contented and happy.

I must beg the reader not to be alarmed; it forms no part of my plan to dwell upon the school life of the man whose career has seemed to me a fit and interesting subject for study

and delineation. But that career was so singularly and directly the result of his character, that I cannot avoid touching on the various agencies by which that character was formed, and of these the system of education pursued at Honeywood Collegiate Establishment was one of the chief.

The boys rose at seven, heard prayers at half-past; dabbled in some sort of study, which was varied every day in the week, till eight; marched round the schoolroom two and two—ranged according to their height, being sized, not from flanks to centre, but from flank to flank, the biggest pair leading, the smallest bringing up the rear, just like the animals going into Noah's ark—to a march rolling out from the organ, till a quarter past eight; sat over a delicious breakfast of bread boiled in milk, not chalk and water, but rich milk, from Miss Beebee's own cows, followed by real good tea, not sky-blue, and capital home-made bread and butter, not bread and

scrape, mind; the big boys, if they preferred it, having eggs, ham, or bacon, instead of the boiled milk, till a quarter to nine; went out into the play-ground, or wandered about the fields belonging to Dr. Beebee—some forty acres, all open to the boys—till half-past nine; lessons or lectures, made as amusing as possible, till eleven; recreation till twelve; amusing lecture till a quarter to one; marching to organ for a quarter of an hour, and dinner; recreation till a quarter past two, and then big lecture in dining-room to whole school, with darkened room, and bangs, and pretty coruscations, and evil smells, and shocks, and other expedients for making science attractive. Then more recreation, and more organ-rolling, and marching, and playing at work, and tea, and music-lessons, with chorus-singing, and dancing, and supper, and bed.

And then there were half-holidays, not ar-

ranged for particular days, but announced when the weather was fine and tempting for cricket, or a distant ramble, or a water excursion, or when there was a crisp frost, and the ice was in good order, and to lose an hour of skating or sliding was purgatory. And there were botanical and geological expeditions, with pic-nic meals. Altogether the steps to Parnassus were thickly strewn with flowers.

How about the fruits? Well, I cannot say much for them; for the meek and timid, a system which made youth so happy a time would have had great advantages, if one could have made sure of their dying at fifteen; but as a training for the fight of life! Train a prize-fighter or a sculler upon beer and skittles, and see what comes of *that!* I do not think that the boys retained much of the various knowledge which was brought before their bewildered eyes. At the same time, if a boy had a taste or a talent, it had a great

chance of being brought out ; and Dr. Beebee could boast of having provided the world with more than one artist, musician, mineralogist, chemist, and actor, whose talents would very likely have never been developed, had they been brought up on the usual reading, writing, arithmetic, Latin, Greek, and geography system. But then very few English parents wish their children to seek their fortunes in those romantic and Bohemian paths, so I fear that *that* consideration would not of itself crowd the Collegiate Establishment.

And yet Dr. Beebee always had as many boys as he could accommodate ; for many tender parents, who had timid or delicate sons, whom they did not like to send to rougher schools, and whom they yet thought it unwise to keep at home, gladly seized on the escape from their dilemma offered them by Honeywood ; and so it happened that the majority of boys were of a very docile nature, with large bumps of veneration, and easy to

keep in order. Of course, pupils of a different temperament continually came into the school; but for them the system did not answer—Dr. Beebee honestly told the parents the truth, and they were soon removed. Harry Johnstone was one of these last; he never took kindly to the peaceable manners and customs of the place, played tricks, was hasty, wanted to fight on one occasion, and was no favourite with either Dr. Beebee or his sister. William Bathurst, on the other hand, became a model pupil; he had a good memory, and a rather mechanical turn of mind, which enabled him to take a superficial interest in the lectures on elementary science; he enjoyed being petted, and made the object of experimental benevolence; and he had a sweet voice for singing, a good ear for music, and a pretty, pale, girlish face, which looked well coming out of a white surplice; so he was put into the choir of the doctor's church, where he warbled chants of a Sunday, and

partook of many fruit and cake festivities, got up for the choristers only.

What did Mrs. Bathurst say to that? I do not know whether she was informed of the Popish proceedings in which her boy was made an actor, but if so, he was so well-treated and happy, that she thought little of anything else. Besides which, her faith in Mr. Pogram and anti-ecclesiastical feelings had been much weakened by the defection of Mr. Johnstone.

About six months after the boys had first gone to school, that gentleman became director of a railway company in which he was a large shareholder; and was thus associated with Lord Rosherville, who had a seat at the same board. Lord Rosherville was a nobleman who was endeavouring to atone for the sins committed against mammon during a youth of profligate extravagance, by an old age of stock-jobbing and sharpness. His ambition was to recover the sums he had

squandered, and to leave the family property in the flourishing state in which he, at the age of twenty-one, had received it. In the pursuit of this Utopian object, he spent his life amongst City men, and hired out his title for allotments of shares to I know not how many companies, of a more or less *bonâ fide* character. It was not a bad trade, for, in addition to the shares, all of which were at *some* period disposable at *some* price, there were his director's fees, varying from one to five guineas; and when he sat as chairman he bagged a double *douceur*.

Mr. Johnstone found Lord Rosherville charming, and Lord Rosherville found Mr. Johnstone useful; and thus the two formed quite a friendship, and his lordship ran down to Acton and took a bed at the cit's house one night; and the cit dined with the lord another night, and met a bishop. The means to remain outside the pale of the Church after that? The chapel was soon deserted, the

rector called, and the conversion of the Johnstone family was complete; for the lady had always had rather a distaste for methodism, and fell easily into her husband's wishes. Mr. Pogram preached a sermon on the text, "Rebuke not an elder, but admonish him as a brother!" and a very pathetic discourse it was; but it was not very effective, and many weaker brethren were staggered by the Johnstone apostasy, Mrs. Bathurst amongst them. But however that lady might be guided by her neighboour in religious matters, she felt no inclination to follow his new lead in things educational, for he soon removed Harry from Honeywood Collegiate Establishment, where, indeed, he did not get on at all well, and sent him to Harrow, at which school a nephew of Lord Rosherville was having a certain amount of classics whipped into him, with whom Mr. Johnstone hoped that his son would strike up a romantic friendship; and though Harry did not do this, he got more good,

morally and intellectually, at the public school in a month, than he had during the whole of his previous existence.

Would William Bathurst have been benefited by the ordeal to which his early friend and companion was exposed? I think so; for though it is true that an extremely timid and weak boy is sometimes cowed and utterly ruined by the rough-and-ready bullying of a public school, such instances are rare; and you will find in each case that delicacy of body has accompanied the feebleness of character; while young Bathurst's health was good, and his frame by no means a weakly one.

But Dr. Beebee considered him a promising pupil; and his mother was satisfied, though she was not so much gratified as she ought to have been, when, at the end of the first half-year, she called to fetch her son home for the holidays, and was informed by Miss Beebee, in a personal interview which she had with

that lady, that "Master Bathurst's 'abbits were very much improved." For, indeed, as she herself had had the sole formation of his previous "'abbits," the remark was not exactly complimentary; and, to tell the truth, she did not think so highly of Miss Beebee after that as she had previously done; and was rather glad when, at the expiration of a twelve-month, William rose out of the little-boy class, and had nothing to do, educationally, with the Doctor's worthy sister.

The years stole by. William Bathurst became a spooney, vacillating, youth; Harry Johnstone a manly, self-reliant, though somewhat awkward, hobbledehoy; Mary Johnstone a staid, thoughtful, cheerful, unaffected little housewife, whom her mother, if she were unwell, or wanted to go out anywhere, could trust implicitly with the management of all household affairs; Minnie Cook, a lively, merry, laughing girl, rather given to quizzing people; a puzzle to Mr. Johnstone, a favourite

with his wife, but holding a position somewhere between that of a protracted doll and a premature daughter, with respect to Mary. The children of eight and six were playmates, the girls of fourteen and twelve held a very different relative position ; and it was amusing to watch the motherly ways of the elder towards the affectionate and impulsive child, who yielded a readier obedience to her than to the real heads of the house.

When the boys came home for the holidays, the old playmates used to unite, and Harry came to consider William as a sort of third girl, whom he liked very well in his way, for old acquaintance sake principally, but whom he certainly despised. For his sister he retained a protecting affection, and of little Minnie he made a pet—a propensity which was much encouraged by his parents, as also by the little maiden herself, who was very fond of him, and counted the days for his periodical return with great punctuality and eagerness.

Nor did William show any signs of outgrowing his attachment for Mary. On the contrary, his first efforts at poetry were addressed to her; and he became more and more awkward and ungainly in her presence, with each recurring occasion, as she unwittingly acquired a reserve and primness in the society of her youthful adorer, which occasionally drove him into paroxysms of pastoral despair. And though the peculiar disposition of the youth disposed him to form a romantic attachment for everything feminine which he approached, so that he was constantly dropping his heart about at the feet of the young misses who were invited to the dances which Dr. Beebee gave whenever the school broke up, he always found that fainter impressions faded from his memory when he once more basked in the presence of his first love.

Great nonsense all this. I grant it; but is it not true? My dear Caustic, can you not

recall the time when you were slightly nonsensical yourself? Great nonsense it was; but William Bathurst did not think it such. However, if youthful loves do not suit the reader's taste, we will close the chapter.

## CHAPTER V.

### FREDERICK LEESON.

When William Bathurst was one of the leading boys at Honeywood, a devourer of eggs and meats instead of bread and milk for breakfast, a sitter-up at night long after the little boys had gone to bed, having licence to go beyond the school premises without asking leave, admitted to the doctor's study, and the free run of his library, and honoured with the paternal friendship of that benevolent pedagogue, who would walk round his private flower garden arm-in-arm with his favourite pupil, expounding to him philanthropic plans of an ecclesiastical-socialistic nature, for the

regeneration of mankind, when he had reached the critical age of sixteen—in short, he made the acquaintance of a new friend, who gave him glimpses of phases of life different from any which had hitherto been presented to his contemplation.

It was on returning to the collegiate establishment, after the summer vacation, and thus commencing what was to be his last year of residence there, that he found a youth of about his own age, whom he had never seen before, which rather surprised him, as it was out of the range of his experience that a new boy should be so old, and unprecedented events were apt to bewilder him. The manners and address of the stranger were likewise impressed with a certain air of ease and self-confidence, startling to a Honeywoodian. He was a well-made and handsome lad, of olive complexion, sparkling dark eyes, and soft curly black hair; his nose very aquiline for his age, that feature being generally the

last to assume any distinctive form. His clothes also were of better cut than a boy who has not yet done growing, can, with all his endeavours, generally obtain; and altogether William Bathurst felt rather as if he were the new boy, and the other the old, when he walked straight up and addressed him.

"Well," said he, "so you have come back at last—there is no other fellow here old enough to talk to, and as I came yesterday, I have been nearly bored to death. You are Bathurst, I suppose? Of course; my name is Leeson—Frederick Leeson. Rum sort of place this—queer old buffer, Beebee; why the devil does the old humbug make fellows wear these rotten college caps? They look very caddish without gowns to match."

William Bathurst was stunned. The collegiate establishment a rum place! Dr. Beebee called plain Beebee, and a humbug, and a buffer! The head-dress of the establishment

styled rotten, and denounced as caddish ! The name of falsehood's papa used in a light and irreverent manner! The astounded youth glanced upwards, in expectation of a thunderbolt, but seeing a clear blue sky without a vestige of a cloud, he began to feel ashamed of the respect in which he had held the Honeywoodian institutions, and tried to laugh an approving chuckle.

"You look rather bothered," continued Leeson. "I suppose you cannot make out how it happens that a fellow like me should be sent to a private school so late. Well, I will tell you how it is. I have no father or mother living, only a guardian. When I was a youngster, I used to get into mischief, and my guardian used to lick me ; but as it did no good, he got tired at last, and sent me to a private school, where they licked me harder. At last they would not keep me any longer there, and so I was sent to Eton, and there they still went on licking me, till last April,

when they kicked me out, and would have no more to say to me."

"And what did they send you away for?"

"Oh! several little things, one on the back of another. I fell in love with a tailor's daughter in the town; and I got lushy, and then I got lushy a second time, and so they bunked me. So says my guardian to me, 'We have been licking you, Fred, ever since you could holloa in reply, and it has had no effect—suppose we try what kindness will do. They say that if you give a bull-dog lots of grub, and show him no rats, he will grow as amiable as a lap-dog; so I am going to send you to a school where they keep the boys in order by moral persuasion, and if the plan answers with you, by Jove! it *is* a good one.' And so here I am, and if I like it, I think I will pull up and be steady a bit; because to be sent away from two schools, it is rather serious, you know, when one comes to think about it, eh?"

Serious! William Bathurst was at a loss to conceive how a fellow-boy could undergo such disgrace and live. His new companion seemed to him to be a monster of depravity, and yet in some sort a creature to be admired, and, if not exactly imitated, at least, not to be allowed to perceive that one would act in a different way oneself, else he might laugh at one, and consider one "a muff," as he graphically expressed himself, which would be the greatest possible disgrace to which one could be subjected.

William Bathurst and Frederick Leeson became great friends, as was natural where one liked to be governed and led, and the other to govern and lead; and as Leeson was on his good behavour, and careful not to say or do anything to offend the prejudices of the doctor, all went on very smoothly, and William Bathurst's education was extended. He learned to be amused by hearing his friend talk deferentially to Dr. Beebee, for the pur-

pose of drawing him out, and turning him into ridicule afterwards. He learned to take an interest in anecdotes which are not generally related in ladies' society. He learned to hear any amount of profane language without being shocked, and even to indulge in a quiet little oath himself now and then. He learned that a glass of rum and shrub was exceedingly palatable, and very refreshing in the course of an afternoon's walk; and he gained a general impression that everything which he had loved, honoured, and revered up to the present time was all stuff, nonsense, hypocrisy, and balderdash; and that most of those things which he had been taught to believe were wicked, were manly actions, which no one who had the smallest particle of self-respect would be deemed innocent of on any account. When he returned home at holiday time, and came once more under the influence of his mother and Mary, he recovered his belief in the good, and forgot his new friend's theories—to

adopt them again, however, on his return.

What influence this association of the two youths would have had upon the career and after-life of the weaker-minded one, had they remained long together at that time, it is difficult to say, nor is it certain that that influence would have been entirely deleterious. Leeson himself honestly believed that he was conferring the greatest possible favour on his friend by "making a man of him," as he naively expressed it; and though he certainly inculcated manly vices as well as manly virtues, the former perhaps rather in the excess of the latter, still I take it that effeminacy and irresolution are themselves vices which often cause the most amiable dispositions to drift into crime; and of these inherent defects in his character, Bathurst was certainly told plainly enough by his outspoken Mentor, who one day summed up all the lessons he had taught him.

They were sitting on a gate in a by-lane

running between two market-gardens ; Leeson with his hat very much on one side, was smoking a cigar, a feat Bathurst was endeavouring to imitate, but the paleness of his face, the contraction of the corners of his mouth, and his constant expectoration showed that, for him at least, the operation was by no means a pleasant one.

" Old Beebee is not a bad sort of fellow, and makes one pretty comfortable ; but it is awfully dull here, and I shall not be sorry to get away," observed Leeson.

" Are you going, then ?" asked Bathurst, only too glad to talk, and so get an opportunity for taking his emetical luxury out of his mouth, and allowing it to smoulder away harmlessly between his fingers, just keeping it alight by an occasional puff.

" Yes," replied the other, " at the end of this half we part ; but I am happy to think that my sojourn here has not been entirely in vain. You know what punch means, and

could even mix a bowl of it yourself. Though unable at present to smoke with pleasure, you are in a fair way towards the acquirement of that accomplishment. You can toss; and know the difference between 'odd man' and 'odd man out'; you can also play at 'beggar my neighbour,' and have even mastered the rudiments of the game of cribbage. I should like to teach you billiards, but unluckily there is no table in the neighbourhood. By-the-bye, what are you going to do with yourself when you leave this, for I suppose you will not stop at school for ever?"

"Oh, no!" replied Bathurst. "I am to leave Honeywood soon, though they will not tell me exactly when, for fear of unsettling me, and then I am to be articled to my Uncle Horace, who is a solicitor."

"What! you are going to be a lawyer, and waste the best years of your life in addling your brains with the driest of all dry books! Don't do it, my dear boy—don't do

it! I might as well have left you in your admiration of 'Childe Harold,' and never have opened your mind to the superiority of 'Don Juan,' if you are to neglect both for Blackstone. I might as well have allowed you to remain in a state of ignorance as to which was your right hand, and which was your left, instead of initiating you in the noble art of self-defence, if you intend to sit all your days on a high stool, writing a lot of nonsense on parchment, and puzzling your brains to discover how many names you can call the same thing, so as to fill a score of sheets with what an honest man would put in half a dozen lines, just to run up a bill against some poor devil, who is probably half ruined already, or else he would not be in your clutches. Oh! hang the law! Go into the army, man. That is the only life for a fellow who must do something!"

There is no doubt but what this talk, and a great deal more to the same effect, disturbed

the mind of William Bathurst very much, and caused him to become, for the first time, discontented with the way in which his future life had been mapped out for him; while his imagination was charmed with the pictures which his friend drew, with a somewhat extravagant touch, of the pleasures of a military career; and had he remained much longer under the same influence, he might have formed something like a resolution to resist the authority of his mother, and strike out a line for himself. But at the end of the half year Leeson got a commission in a cavalry regiment; and William Bathurst being at the same time withdrawn from school, and articled to his uncle, soon forgot the independent counsels he had received, and, submitting quietly to home authorities, became once more a good boy.

It had been arranged, indeed, between the two friends, that Bathurst should go down to the depôt, where Leeson was learning

stable duty, jogging, sword flourishing, practical wit, the art of spending the largest sum of money in the smallest space of time, in the acquisition of the least amount of amusement, and various other crack accomplishments ; but Mrs. Bathurst received the proposition with such horrified opposition, that her son never again reverted to the subject ; and so Frederick Leeson got jolted into a cavalry seat, instructed in the mysteries of telling off a troop, and packed off to his regiment in India, without any further interview with his friend, whom he soon forgot all about.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE LIFE OF A STEADY YOUNG MAN.

"HAPPY the nation which has no history." Is that true? Should we appreciate peace if we never had war? Would liberty seem worth much if there had been no struggle to win it? Happiness is a slippery eel, and the more comforts and luxuries we have, the less do we enjoy existence. When a young man of fortune, who has been kept rather tight, first comes into his property, he mostly settles down to the pursuit of pleasure, and soon finds that the delights which had been so exquisite to read about, are not worth so very

much after all. Grand entertainments, delicate wines, and general soft living soon becomes a bore, and he finds himself wondering in the morning how he shall ever tide through the day. Suddenly he takes it into his head to make some expedition. He goes off to the ice seas in a yacht, or to North America for the shooting, or to Switzerland to try how near he can go to breaking his neck without actually doing it; or he belongs to a regiment which is ordered away on active service; he has to fare coarsely, to sleep hard, to undergo fatigue, and for the first time he finds himself in a real state of enjoyment; the mere sensation of being alive is ecstasy; clouds, trees, rocks come out with a beauty which no ballet ever approached; the rough, out-of-tune singing of Jack or Tom has a music superior to Giuglini's; the poorest joke seems the finest wit. And his food—what dinner at Greenwich or the club ever had the flavour of the dry biscuit or coarse bread,

of the bird shot and, may be, cooked by himself, of the hunk of tough salt beef, or, luxury of luxuries, the tin of preserved Irish stew? What hock, what Clicquot, what Lafitte, could compare with the tea boiled in an iron pot over the bivouac fire at the close of a hard day's work? What regalia ever had the flavour of the pipe of cavendish smoked while lying round the extemporised hearth after the rough meal? Of course peace and plenty are blessings; but we mortals are contradictory beings, and our blessings become curses when we have too much of them; and, on the whole, I think I had rather that the country I belonged to *had* a history.

Where on earth have I got to? When I began the chapter, I meant to take the proverb for granted, and say that for the few next years William Bathurst had no history, and was therefore happy; and indeed he was so, for the quiet life he led suited him very

well. He was articled, as had been proposed, to his uncle, and resided with his mother, going up to town every morning in the same omnibus with Mr. Johnstone, and returning in like manner in the afternoon. And this regular life went on day after day, week after week, month after month, with hardly a break. He never slept in town ; he had no male acquaintances of his own age except Harry Johnstone, who was not often at home, and two other articled clerks, who voted him a muff, justly, and suspected that he must be a tale-bearer, unjustly, and, therefore, rather avoided him. He had his amusements, though; he went to church twice on Sunday, and to a dissenting lecture in the evening (that was the way in which Mrs. Bathurst had compromised matters at last) ; and in May he accompanied his mother to several religious meetings held at Exeter Hall. He was also great at small tea-parties, for which he was considered a very nice young man, though

the veto which was placed by Mrs. Bathurst upon his dancing or playing at cards rather impaired his social usefulness. But that which threw a charm over his monotonous existence, the butter and honey spread over his daily bread, which kept him from pining after more piquant food, was his love for Mary Johnstone, who was growing up into a very charming young woman, very quiet and staid, but without a taint of prudish affectation; cheerful, sensible, domestic, just the wife a mother would choose for her son; and quite pretty enough to make any son of good taste acquiesce with eagerness in the maternal selection. The young people were not exactly engaged, but they held that relation which is expressed by the term of "understanding each other."

Whenever they met in mixed society, they always came together, they made each other trifling presents on their respective birthdays, they called one another by the Christian name,

and they now and then quarrelled, and were very miserable until they had made it up. The parents very much approved of all this—Mrs. Bathurst because it kept her son out of mischief, Mrs. Johnstone because she thought the youth would make a respectable, steady husband, not too determined to have his own way, and Mr. Johnstone because he considered the match a fair one in a pecuniary point of view. Harry Johnstone, indeed, thought his sister a great deal too good for his early friend; but as there was no good to be done by promulgating such an opinion, he wisely held his tongue, though when, in the course of time, he went to Oxford, and brought college friends down to dine, in the vacations, at his father's house, he secretly thought that it would be rather an advantage if one of them would take a fancy to his sister, and cut William Bathurst out. No such event occurred, however, and Harry had to console himself by flirting desperately with

Minnie Cook, an amusement which had been much encouraged by his parents up to the present time, though Mr. Johnstone's views on the question were undergoing a change. It would have been too great an infringement of poetical rules, if the courses of *two* true loves had run smooth in the same household.

Was William Bathurst quite contented? Did he never feel inclined to rebel against the strict government in which his mother held him? I cannot say so much. It was not without envy that he saw other young men of his own age and position passing in and out of their clubs; the theatrical placards which met his eye every day on blank walls and scaffoldings often excited a mournful longing in his breast. The click of billiard balls, which fell sometimes on his ear as he passed through a solitary street when the weather was hot and the windows open, struck a responsive chord somewhere in his interior; when he read of hunting, shooting, fishing

adventures, he thought it hard that a cruel fate should have thrust him out of all such pleasures. The blood sparkled up in his veins, and produced a titillation in his toes, when he heard the sprightly tones of dance-music; and though he was very fond of Mary, and looked forward with pleasure to the day when he should marry her, he would have preferred chambers in London, and his own way for five years, to an immediate accomplishment of his matrimonial wishes. Indeed, I very much fear that his love for Mary Johnstone was considerably strengthened and supported by the hope that, when he was married, he would escape from the control of his mother. Why did he not resist that over-strained authority? I do not know. He tried it once or twice, but always gave in eventually, and his chains were the more firmly riveted after each unsuccessful revolt. One great support of Mrs. Bathurst's authority was her bad health, for she was suffering from

a heart-complaint, with which she was at times very ill, and any strong excitement was, of course, very bad for her. Now, nothing excited her so much as opposition on the part of her son, and William, who was an amiable young man, was naturally floored by the idea of committing matricide.

This critical state of her health caused Mrs. Bathurst to view the attachment between her son and Mary Johnstone with peculiar pleasure, and she hoped that they would be married young, in order that William might not be left to his own devices when she herself was taken. For she was aware that the way in which she had brought him up was not calculated to strengthen his naturally weak character, and she looked forward with no unreasonable alarm to the time when, freed from her influence, he should find himself drifting helplessly amongst the currents of temptation. Mary's character, however, exactly suited her to the task of taking quiet command of him,

and keeping him straight. Calm, affectionate, sensible, she was just the woman to acquire a strong, though unapparent and unfelt, influence over her husband, even though he were a man of stronger self-will than William Bathurst.

If that young man were deficient in self-reliance and firmness, he was not wanting in brains; and he succeeded very well in his professional studies, becoming, indeed, by dint of constant and earnest application, a very good lawyer, so that his uncle felt that, by the time he was legally able, he would be also practically fit to enter into the partnership, and take a fair share of the work and responsibility. A fact which was of the more importance, as Mr. Horace Bathurst had for some years been declining in health and mental power—and his was not a long-lived family. He had endeavoured, when his nephew had first entered his office, to persuade his mother to allow him to introduce the lad into society,

and generally to give him a little more liberty. But as his representations and offers were disregarded, he soon grew tired of offering them, and allowed matters to take their course.

One warm July evening, Mary Johnstone and Minnie Cook were walking with their arms interlaced, after the manner of young ladies, through the paths of Mr. Johnstone's garden, which, from the growth of the shrubs, was more shut out from the road than it used to be. Mary was tall and somewhat slender, but graceful and undulating, with light chestnut hair, honest steadfast blue eyes, good fair complexion. Minnie was shorter, plumper, quicker in movement, and a brunette. Both would have passed for pretty anywhere, and as they sauntered along, without bonnets and in white muslin dresses, they would have made a very nice photograph, which I much wish had been taken for introduction here, "to face this page," as it would have saved me the

annoyance of having to attempt the above most inadequate description.

Mr. Johnstone and his son Harry, who was at home, were finishing a bottle of claret in the dining-room; Mrs. Johnstone was composing herself for a nap in the drawing-room, so that the two girls had been in for a good undisturbed gossip, which, however, must have had reference to somewhat melancholy topics; for Minnie, who was, as a general rule, the brightest, pertest little gipsy living, looked as ruffled and unhappy as a cat who has been stroked the wrong way, and a tear sparkled on her long black eyelashes.

"No, Polly," she was saying—she always called her friend Polly, and was very savage if any one else did; "it is all very well for you to say that, but you know that you do not think it; it is not fancy—your papa's manner has altered very much towards me, and there is something wrong, I am sure. He has not heard from my papa for ever so long."

"That is because there is a war going on, and the post has been stopped. It was understood some time back that we were not to expect to hear."

"But that is no reason why Mr. Johnstone should be so unkind."

"My dearest Minnie, do not think that; papa is often abrupt in his manner when he is anxious about some business matter—he is just the same to everybody, and you must surely have noticed it before."

"Yes, but I was never before made to feel that I was an encumbrance, and in his way; dear Mrs. Johnstone sees it, if you do not, for she has been extra kind to me, to make up. What can he wish to send me to school for, if it is not to get rid of me? To be sent to school at sixteen! Was there ever such an indignity?"

"I cannot imagine why papa thought of that—it must have been in consequence of something Mr. Cook wrote to him when you

first came to us. I shall be very unhappy if you go away, and I cannot believe papa was in earnest. Still, dear, there is no indignity in it; girls often go for a year to a finishing school at sixteen—you get more and better masters than you could get at home, and——"

"Here's some one coming," interrupted Minnie.

"Some one" was a well-grown, rather good-looking young fellow of about twenty, with grey eyes, delicate nose, finely-chiselled but too feminine mouth, and receding chin. There was something old-fashioned and sombre about his dress, which made him look unlike other young men of his age and position, and the way in which he wore his hat stuck on the back of his head gave him something of an idiotic air. This was William Bathurst, who was in the habit of walking over after dinner, being indeed entirely dependent on the Johnstone family in general, and Mary in par-

ticular, for conversation and companionship.

William was not such a bore as you would have expected; he found time to read the papers and lighter literature of the day, and he talked freely about himself and his plans, wishes, and feelings; he took an interest in the little events of the place, and made remarks upon them which were not devoid of shrewdness, and, in short, was a pleasant lively companion enough, whom not only Mary but Minnie was, as a general rule, glad to see, though, on the present occasion, the latter was vexed enough to have her conversation interrupted. He had not done much harm, however, for the conference between the two girls would anyhow have been soon interrupted by Harry Johnstone, who presently came lounging out through the dining-room window, his thumbs in his waistcoat-pockets, and his brown locks curling crisply over his hatless head.

"Hollo, William, old fellow, how are you?"

he cried, when he caught sight of Bathurst. "Come in and have a glass of wine—no? Well, how is John Doe?"

"As well as can be expected, and very anxious to make your acquaintance. You still intend reading for the bar, when you have taken your degree, do you not?"

"Yes, I daresay I shall join the Middle Temple, and if I ever am called, I shall expect you to give me lots of briefs. But, I say, you must know an awful amount of law by this, you are such a steady chap, always working at it."

"Well, I dare say I could make your will for you, if you want it done."

"Hum! you mean to insinuate that I have not much to leave, and never shall have, unless I follow your bright example. William, my boy, there are hopes for you yet; you have chaff in you, and where there is chaff there is wheat; a straw shows which way the wind blows. Why, Minnie, how solemn you look;

in all these years I have never seen you look so grave before. What! I declare it's been crying! Pooty iddle ting, den come and tell me all about it."

And he put her arm through his, and walked her off down another path. And so the two couples were separated, which was not often the case when they met, for they had grown up together so amicably that their love-making was conducted in a very cousinly sort of way. But both pairs came out stronger than usual this evening.

"Do you know, Mary," said William Bathurst, "I shall be out of my articles in two or three months, and then I shall go into the firm as a partner. And soon after that, we had better get married, I suppose—had we not?"

"Get married! We!"

"Yes, I cannot go on living with my mother as I do at present for ever, can I?"

"I do not know; perhaps it is hardly desirable that you should."

"Well, then, I must have a wife, and so you see you must marry me."

"Upon my word," said Mary, with a grave smile, "you jump to your conclusion! I have never learned logic, it is true, but it seems to me that even if we grant the necessity of your having a wife, it does not follow, as a matter of course, that I am bound to undertake the office."

"Oh! but you promised years ago, when we were both little children."

"Dear me! If we are bound to fulfil such very early engagements, I am afraid that you will find yourself involved in a good deal of difficulty. The black nurse who came over with Minnie could certainly bring an action for breach of promise; and there are at least four other young ladies running about the world somewhere to whom you have plighted your troth at one or another of those parties which used to be given every half year at Honeywood."

"No; but seriously, Mary, don't you think I should make a very tidy sort of husband?"

"I really cannot say. I wish you had more firmness of character."

"But I have a great deal more than you think, only I have never yet had a chance of showing it."

"Well, there is plenty of time yet—you are too young to think about getting married for some years to come."

That was the talk of the one couple; the other began with joking, gradually grew serious, and at last came to the topic which had formed the conversation of the girls before they were interrupted. Harry Johnstone suddenly stopped short in the middle of the path.

"What!" cried he. "Send you to school *now!* Impossible, absurd! my father must have been jesting. It shall not be. I will speak to him about it; and if he is in earnest,

and persists, we will run off, and get married in spite of him."

"Oh, no, Harry!" sobbed Minnie. "Do not quarrel with your father on my account; that would be too dreadful!"

"Do not be afraid. I will be quite calm and cool. I know what is due to a parent; but I also know what is due to myself and to you. I shall be of age presently, and free from his control; and—and— But I cannot think he was in earnest; there must be some mistake."

Mr. Johnstone, who had gone into the drawing-room when his son quitted the dinner-table, stood at the window watching with a gloomy brow the young people, who every now and then were brought by a turn of the path under his gaze. At last, as if he could contain himself no longer, he stamped his foot, and muttered through his teeth—

"Designing minx! It was an evil day when she first set her foot in my house!"

Mrs. Johnstone sat up, and opened her eyes wide with astonishment.

"What are you talking about, John?" said she. "Who is a designing minx?"

"Who? Why, have you got no eyes, Jane? That daughter of Cook's, to be sure! Cannot you see how she is trying to inveigle Harry. Look at her now! leaning on his arm, and staring up in his face, as if—ugh! I'll stop her game!"

Mrs. Johnstone looked more and more surprised.

"Why, I thought—" she began.

"Yes; you thought, and you thought!" interrupted her husband, snappishly; "and I daresay you have encouraged it all, like a blind fool. But I tell you, ma'am, I am not going to let my son marry a beggar girl, who is dependent on me for her daily bread."

"Come, Johnstone, be reasonable, and don't call me names, for I won't stand it. I am no more blind or a fool than you are; and

if I encouraged them, so did you. You always led me to expect that Minnie would be almost an heiress."

"Well, if I did, it was because I was taken in—swindled," returned Mr. Johnstone, in a milder tone; for he felt that it would be a false move to offend his wife, and so very likely drive her into alliance with the lovers, a contingency which might possibly happen anyhow, for the good-natured old dear was hardly endowed with that wise prudence which caused Mr. Johnstone's respect and affection for people to rise and fall with their pecuniary position. Of course both Christianity and morality demanded that the girl who was to be loved and treated as a daughter when rich, should be spurned and neglected when poor; but Mrs. Johnstone hardly took so virtuous, moral, and religious a view of the question; and she was so shocked out of her habitual dutifulness to her husband by what seemed to her his mercenary selfishness,

that there would have been a bit of a storm had she not, on her side, been restrained by a legitimate curiosity to learn what had happened to change her husband's views and Minnie's prospects so completely ; and by the exercise of a good deal of tact she gradually extracted from her husband all he himself knew about the matter. It was a long story, interlarded with a good deal of abuse and speculation ; but this is a summary of it :—

During the last few years Mr. Johnstone had from time to time received from Canton somewhat strange accounts of the proceedings of Mr. Alexander Cook. Ever since he had lost his wife and parted from his child, that gentleman had been restless, uneasy, eccentric, full of schemes for carrying trade into the distant corners of the earth, which, in truth, is morally as well as actually round, and has no distant corners. Domestic grief often takes the form of enterprise with the Anglo-Saxon ; and many a joy to mankind has had

its root in the sorrow of the individual. The final and most serious project of Mr. Cook had been the establishment of a large business in Burmah, an idea which had been put into his head by an intelligent Burmese, who had visited Canton, and had formed a close friendship with the English merchant, who was at last gained over to all his schemes, and actually set to work to acquire the Burmese language, with the intention of permanently settling in that country. This at least was the deduction drawn from his proceedings by the Canton colony, for he was exceedingly taciturn about his intentions, strict secrecy being, it was urged by his friend Shwai-ee, absolutely necessary to success. At last Mr. Cook wound up his affairs, and left China, and Mr. Johnstone received his next remittance for Minnie through the hands of his Calcutta agent. He also received a letter from Mr. Cook himself, recommending his child to his continued care, expressing his

hope of retiring finally to England in a few years, when the business he had in hand was satisfactorily established, and hinting that probably he would not return in the position of a pauper. He also so far let in light upon his plans as to state that he was established as a merchant at Amerapoorah. This was satisfactory, promising—promising enough, but not, alas! performing; for the remittances, which had come so regularly for all these years, now stopped; nor did Mr. Cook, as was at first expected, make his appearance instead. What had become of him? Mr. Johnstone's Calcutta agent did not know, he had heard nothing of Mr. Cook for a long time, and had no means of gaining any tidings from Amerapoorah, because we happened just then to be engaged in a Burmese war. It was to be feared that Mr. Cook's nationality had been discovered, and that some misfortune had happened to him. But what had become of his fortune?—Surely he

had not sunk everything he possessed in the centre of a barbarous country. He must have a banker, a partner, or an agent at Calcutta. Mr. Johnstone's correspondent had made every inquiry, without being able to come to the rights of this matter. Mr. Cook had conducted all his proceedings with such secrecy that it was impossible to say what he had done. He had been in a very strange and excited state ever since he had lost his wife, and it was to be feared that any rash conduct in the matter of employing his capital was possible, especially as he had entered into the scheme, whatever it might be, which he had in hand, with very great zeal and ardour.

It took months for these questions to be asked and answered, and in the meantime Mr. Johnstone was placed in rather an awkward position, which did not improve as each recurring mail came in without bringing any tidings of Minnie's father, and the chances of his turning up at the head of a small fleet of

vessels laden with gold and silver became smaller and smaller.

And so, at last, the distasteful truth came home to Mr. Johnstone, that he had received this child into his family, had brought her up, had, by many a profession of Christian benevolence, pledged himself to the world for her future support, and, worst of all, had encouraged the attachment which he had seen growing up between her and his son, all on the supposition that she was the daughter of a rich man, who now turned out to be a ruined, and probably a dead, speculator. It might have been a consolation to him that so far, at least, he was not out of pocket—rather the contrary; for the money which for years had been regularly paid to him had more than covered all the expenses of her keep and education; and when he called her a beggar and a pauper, he exaggerated, for her father had, from time to time, sent her presents, which had been put aside to provide her with

pocket-money, and these now amounted to a nice little sum; but Mr. Johnstone was not affected by these considerations, he had made up his mind that Minnie should marry his son, receive a handsome dowry on the occasion, and invest the money in his business, and he esteemed himself defrauded of the exact sum which he had thus too sanguinely calculated upon; and there was no balm for his wounded feelings in the reflection that he had the character of a Christian philanthropist and affectionate, disinterested guardian to keep up before the world.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION.

When Harry Johnstone came calmly to consider what was to be said and done next, he found himself in a fix. Should he go to his father and tax him with his intention of sending Minnie Cook to school at once, or should he wait a bit, and see whether he referred to the subject again? The latter seemed to be the most desirable course, seeing that Mr. Johnstone might simply state that he had no such intention as his son imagined; or that he was acting in accordance with Mr. Cook's instructions; or that he merely suggested a plan which he thought a good one, without

any wish to force it upon Minnie, if it were distasteful to her; or that he, Harry, had better mind his own business. Any such paternal reply or remark would leave him silent, out-flanked, and looking foolish. But then, on the other hand, Minnie was in a state of distress and uncertainty, and he had undertaken the office of her champion and defender. The alleged alteration of Mr. Johnstone's manner towards the girl of late might exist only in her fancy, or, at all events, mean nothing, for the religionist and philanthropist out of doors was rather a queer-tempered fellow under his own roof; but still Minnie held a different opinion, and Harry felt bound to set her mind at rest one way or the other. And then he was about to visit a friend who had some grouse-shooting in Scotland in prospect in a few days, and had no time to wait for a further disclosure of the feelings and intentions of his father, so that he was forced into immediate action of some

sort, and the principal difficulty left was how to obtain an interview. They generally had some friend or other to dinner, who prevented the father and son being alone when the ladies left the room, as they had been on the previous evening; and Mr. Johnstone left the house directly after breakfast, and did not return till it was time to dress. It would never do to speak upon the subject before the whole family, and yet how was he to catch his father alone without a formal application for a private interview? A formidable course to take, which would add greatly to the awkwardness of the whole affair, and yet there seemed to be no other alternative.

Mr. Johnstone, however, kindly relieved his son of all his doubts and difficulties of this kind by intimating, after breakfast on the following morning, that he wished to see him alone in a little room, which, for some unknown reason, was called the study, to which apartment he solemnly led the way, closed the

door, placed his watch upon the table, and seated himself in a large leathern arm-chair, motioning Harry to take up his position in a similar dentist parlour-looking piece of furniture standing opposite.

"I have delayed my journey to town this morning, Harry," he began, "because I wish to speak to you upon a very important subject. Brought up together as you have been, it is very natural that you should be on terms of considerable intimacy with Miss Cook—that, in fact, you should regard her almost as a sister, and treat her with a familiarity which, in the case of any other young lady, would be considered by the world as significant of a warmer attachment. But I wish to draw your consideration to the fact that attentions, which were harmless enough when you were both children, are now fraught with considerable danger to the peace of mind of the young lady who is the object of them. It is true that she is still quite a girl—indeed, her

education is not yet completed, for as it will be needful for her to gain her own livelihood, it is necessary that she should acquire a more thorough knowledge of feminine accomplishments than those need attain who are never likely to be called upon in their turn to impart them; but girls are more precocious than men, and she is not too young to form an attachment to a young man like yourself, who is constantly by her side talking and trifling. I hope, then, you will consider that what is an idle amusement for you, may be a serious injury to her. Be careful—that is all I have to say."

And Mr. Johnstone looked at his watch, and made a movement as if about to rise, which was arrested by his son.

"I beg your pardon, father," said the latter. "There is some mistake here, which had better be cleared up at once. I cannot express how much you surprise me by your remarks, for I always considered that you particularly

desired that I should one day marry Minnie, and that you were aware of the readiness with which I was prepared to meet your views upon the subject. As, however, you seem to have doubts upon the latter question, you will be glad to learn that there is no fear of my trifling with the affections of the orphan who has been entrusted to your care, seeing that any love which she may have for me is returned equally, and it is the dearest wish of my heart to call her my wife."

"Your wife! Stuff and nonsense, boy!—the girl has not a penny to bless herself with! It is true that I did not at one time look forward with disfavour to the possibility of some such connexion as that which you allude to; but that was when there was a prospect of your interests being forwarded by the alliance. Now, I regret to say, Mr. Cook is ruined—dead most likely. He sank his whole fortune in some savage part of Burmah, and has not been heard of since this war broke out.

Common honesty should have led him to make some provision for his child before he embarked in so wild a scheme. But no; he has disappeared, leaving the girl dependent upon me for the food she eats and the clothes on her back. I hope you see the impossibility of marrying a charity-girl, the daughter of a swindling fellow like that!"

"Well, no, sir, I cannot say that I do. It seems to me, on the contrary, that she more than ever needs a protector, now that her father is ruined, and, too probably, dead; and I do not—— "

"Heaven grant me patience!" cried Mr. Johnstone, with a gesture which showed that he really needed the blessing he craved. "What was the use of giving you an expensive education at Harrow and Oxford if you have not learnt to despise such sickly sentimentality as this! Do you not know that marriage is an important thing, and a man of sense will not incur the responsibility unless

he can forward his interests by the step? You might have found that out by this time, with all the advantages you have had. A little wildness and dissipation I was prepared for, but that a young fellow who has mixed with gay men of the world should want to bring the morbid dreams of a poet off the stage and into real life, I own, surprises me."

Harry felt himself getting angry; his eyes sparkled and his face grew white, with the exception of two red spots on his cheek-bones. Remembering whom he was addressing, however, he forced himself to speak calmly and deliberately.

"It is very true, sir, that the education you have given me, and for which I am most grateful, was not calculated to make me a hero of romance; and perhaps some of my friends and companions have held female virtue and domestic happiness rather cheap; but, at all events, they were men of honour,

and I do not think one of them would advise me to repudiate an engagement formed with a young lady under my father's care, in his house, and with his connivance, under the impression that she was rich, because of misfortunes which had befallen the parent from whom the money was expected. I believe that the most worldly of them would say that I was in bad luck and had made a mess of it, but that I must keep my pledge."

"Pledge!—engagement!" cried Mr. Johnstone, angered out of his propriety, and hissing out an expletive which need not be recorded. "An engagement between a boy at college and a schoolgirl! I never thought you were such a fool!"

"Schoolgirl! It is true, then, that you are going to send her out of your house?"

"Yes, in spite of the return she has made me for all my kindness by endeavouring to entrap my only son, I intend to complete my task, and incur the expense necessary for

enabling her to get her own living as a governess. And after what you have said this morning, I shall take good care that she goes off soon, and has no opportunity of practising her arts under my roof again."

"She never practised arts, sir, and you know it; and your conduct to the unprotected girl who—God forgive me, I was nearly telling the truth to my father!" and with these words Harry abruptly left the room.

Mr. Johnstone waited until he was quite calm and smooth, and then marched forth in his usual stately manner, and took his seat in an unwonted omnibus, which passed an hour later than the one he generally went by—a delay which excited much surprise and comment amongst the Acton conductors, who were quite aggrieved by the irregularity.

About half an hour after he had gone, Harry lounged into a summer-house, where his sister and Minnie were seated, working,

sketching, or reading, after their custom on fine mornings in warm weather.

"I say, Mary, old girl," said he, "just look my mother up and keep her company for five minutes, will you? I want to speak to Minnie alone a bit. You don't mind, do you? Perhaps I shall not see her again for ever so long. And tell mother I want a chat with her, too, presently. Well, Minnie," he added, when they were alone, "it is all true; they are going to send you to school."

"I knew it!" she cried. "And you have had a quarrel with your father!"

"Well," he replied, "there has been a bit of a row. But the fact was, he went too far, for he said that we were not to be married. Don't cry, little 'un, it's all right. I have made up my mind what to do. Do you go to school, and do all they want quietly; and in another month I shall be of age, and then I will come and run off with you. I mean to give up the idea of taking my degree. I will

leave Oxford, and get my living as a clerk, or a secretary, or something of that sort. I have no debts, luckily, and am something in hand—besides which, there is some money owing to me, and my caution money, and the furniture of my rooms, and my horse. Oh! we shall have enough to start with."

"And I have nearly two thousand pounds," cried Minnie.

"The dickens you have! Why, my father said—well, never mind. We must live in an attic. You won't mind that?"

"Oh, no!"

"And cook the dinner?"

"What fun! I can roast chestnuts beautifully."

"And light the fire?"

"I can do that, if somebody will lay it properly."

And so they chatted for I don't know how long, more than the five minutes first asked for, certainly; and then Harry went to his

mother, and had a long conference with her. She tried to persuade her son to temporize; to remain at the university, and let things go on as they were for the present. But Harry was a very energetic youth when he had once come to a determination, and was settled in his purpose of immediate action.

If he delayed getting some appointment which would bring him at least bread and cheese at once, he urged, his father might accept a situation as governess for Minnie before he was in a position to rescue her from such a fate. It was quite true that he was hurting his future prospects by the step he proposed taking, but he could not help that. His first duty was to the girl to whom he had, with his parents' consent, plighted his troth; and if his father chose to change his mind, it only made his own responsibility the greater. Still, if Mr. Johnstone chose to guarantee him a small income, he would relinquish his plan, and go to the bar as he originally in-

tended. But he knew very well that his father would make no compromise of the kind, and so it was useless to take such a contingency into consideration.

Poor Mrs. Johnstone was in a sad fix; she could not blame her son, and yet she did not like to encourage him in a course which was likely to be injurious to his interests. And so her appeals were urgent, but somewhat contradictory, as she wanted him not to break with his father, and yet not to give up Minnie. Finally, she promised all the help she could give, both mediatorially and pecuniarily, to the lovers; and it made Harry much happier to have the countenance of, at all events, one parent, and that the one he loved best and respected most.

Mary, he, of course, found an ardent, though a prudent ally. The sorrow she felt at the idea of parting from Minnie, ensured plenty of indignation against her father; and though she did not like the notion of her bro-

ther—in her eyes the pink of aristos—coming down to the level of a clerk, she yet owned the necessity of his preventing Minnie being sent out as a governess, a position for which she was, of all living young ladies, the least fitted. They were all four puzzled by the animus shown by Mr. Johnstone against the poor girl; not knowing the hate felt by the man at the head of a shaky business towards anyone connected with the disappointment of money, upon which he had reckoned for its support.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### AN OLD FRIEND.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon, and thousands of clerks were wiping or sucking their pens, closing ledgers, locking safes, brushing hats, changing coats, and passing generally from the state of grub to that of butterfly, while their minds, turning from the dull routine of the desk, reverted gladly to their wives, their dinners, or whatever objects stood out most prominently as the representative delights of home.

A large herd of elephantine omnibusses was congregated about the Mansion House, into and over which the human tide kept pouring,

with a child-like faith in the probability of the vehicles moving on in time, though the horses, thrice happy animals, who lived before the invention of knife-boards, seemed utterly unable to move farther than a yard at a time. Yet the sober four-wheeler managed to find a way through the crowd, while the light and jaunty hansom darted in and out like a sword-fish disporting himself amongst a shoal of whales. Nor were elegant broughams, drawn by showy highsteppers, wanting, mostly belonging to members of the Stock Exchange these, men who, being rich to-day, may be paupers to-morrow, and who, therefore, wisely consider that every pound spent on their personal comfort, pleasure, or amusement, is so much secured against the caprice of fortune. Crowds of people, also, whose pockets were light or limbs cramped, preferred travelling homewards on their own legs, and the pavements were jammed up with pedestrians.

Amongst these latter was William Bathurst,

who always walked to the White Horse Cellar, in Piccadilly, and took his omnibus from thence. On this particular afternoon he felt less inclined to go quietly home than usual, and walked along in a reverie, the leading idea running through which was, what an ill-used and unfortunate individual he was. Other young men could go about as they liked, dine where they chose, see a little of life. He envied everybody around him—the stock-brokers in their broughams, the young men who were articled with himself, and who were going to Vauxhall that evening; even the copying-clerks in his uncle's office, who, if they had small salaries, could at least spend them as they liked. Nay, he even doubted whether he were not worse off than a little dirty boy who begged a penny from him, for he at least had plenty of liberty, if not of food, and though he might often have to sleep under Waterloo Bridge, he could select what dry arch he chose.

These feelings increased in strength with every step he took westward. He entered the Strand, and saw a noisy party of students issuing from King's College. "Happy dogs!" murmured he. He passed a house which purported to be The Cigar Divan, and his heart beat quick with curiosity and desire. A divan! He imagined an apartment fitted up with oriental splendour, a fountain in the middle, luxurious couches all round, turbaned servants bearing hookahs, sweetmeats, coffee, and sherbets to the customers, probably a performance of dancing-girls every quarter of an hour. He had half an hour to spare, and felt wonderfully inclined to go in, but did not like. Perhaps they would not admit him in boots, for fear of his spoiling the cushions. He passed the theatres, and his longings found vent in a sigh; the idea of their doors being sealed to him was too painful, and he hurried on past Trafalgar Square, along Pall Mall, up St. James's Street. Could those young men on

the steps of the clubs—could that particular swell who had just mounted his horse, and was progressing like a crab, sideways, up the street—belong to the same species as himself? Were they demigods, or was he himself an ape, or what was it? He was aroused from these contemplations by a smart slap on the back, and, turning sharply round, found himself standing face to face with a tall, broad, erect young man, of dazzling aspect. He had dark curly hair, and merry eyes, and an aquiline nose, and a black silky moustache. From the glossy hat, balanced, and just a trifle cocked on his head, to his light gloves and shiny boots, he was every inch a swell, rather over-dressed, perhaps, in the matters of jewelry and colour, but carrying that off by his handsome face, good figure, and air of intense self-complacency.

"Well, Bathurst, my boy, how are you?" cried this gorgeous apparition.

"Leeson!"

"Come, you do know me? I was afraid I had been scorched and be-niggered out of all remembrance in that confounded India. I am glad to have met you, old fellow. I have been knocking about here for the last month, though, and have never seen you anywhere. Are you about town?"

"Yes. No. That is——"

"I see. Come into the club and have a glass of sherry."

"I should be very happy, but the fact is——"

"That's all right, come along."

"But I have to meet the omnibus."

"Oh! hang the omnibus; you can get an omnibus any day, and you have not seen me for I don't know how many years."

And taking him by the arm, Leeson drew Bathurst into the Epicurean, and had him seated at a small table before a pint of sherry ere he well knew where he was.

"Well," said Leeson, pouring out the wine,

"and what are you doing with yourself? Have you taken to the law as you intended?"

"Yes, I am articled to my uncle the solicitor, but I shall pass my examination, and begin practising on my own account soon?"

"That is right, you are a wise man, and I gave you bad advice, I remember once, when I urged you to go into the army. I wish I was a lawyer, or a banker, or something which got paid decently. Hang soldiering, it does not give a fellow bread and cheese! How do you like this sherry?—will you have some bitters with it?"

Bitters were a sealed bottle to Bathurst, who thought the sherry very nice, and did not see any advantage in mixing it with an unknown element, which, from the name, would probably spoil it. But his friend took no notice of his refusal.

"Do," he urged, "it will give you an appetite for your dinner. You will dine with me

here, of course. Waiter, bring some bitters; and look here, secure me a table in the stranger's room; this gentleman will dine with me. Let us see the bill of fare."

"But stop!" cried bewildered Bathurst. "My dear fellow, you are very kind, and I am much obliged, I am sure, but——"

"Nonsense! obliged indeed! I'll dine with you to-morrow, if you are so nasty particular, and then we shall be square."

"I do not mean that; on the contrary, it would give me the greatest pleasure to be your guest, only I have to go home. I am living with my mother at Acton, and, as it is, I fear that I have missed my usual omnibus and must go by the next."

"Ah! that is right; I like a dutiful son. If there is one thing that I admire more than another, it is filial affection; though I must say it is carrying the matter rather too far to live with one's mother altogether. It must be very slow at times, eh? Anyhow, you

dine with your mother every day, and only have a chance of seeing me once in a hundred years, so I am sure Mrs. Bathurst would not be so unreasonable as to object to having a solitary feed for once."

"But she will be waiting dinner for me, and will think some accident has happened. She is so easily alarmed."

"Ah! to be sure, ladies are such fidgety creatures. That is why I never mean to marry until I find a woman whose nerves have been extracted. Unless, indeed, I light upon an heiress who can be mesmerized. Good idea that! I'd send her to sleep, and go out and spend her money, and wake her up again when I went home. But about your mother—the matter is easily settled. Write her a note to say that you are going to dine in town, and send it by the omnibus. Come, finish your sherry, and go to the writing-table. When you have done your letter, we will take it ourselves to the omnibus."

William Bathurst was in a most uncomfortable frame of mind. It was a dreadful thing to offend his mother; and it was just as bad to repulse the advances of this superb soldier who honoured him with his friendship. And, then, how could he own that he was such a nincompoop as not to dare to dine in town without the maternal permission? *That* he felt he could not do. But what other excuse could he make?—Business?—an engagement? He should have thought of that before—it was too late now. Besides, a good dinner in such company was not without its peculiar temptations. Finally, he wrote the desired note, and Leeson having by that time settled the important questions of soup, fish, wine, &c., they left the club and strolled quietly up Piccadilly to the White Horse Cellar, where Bathurst discovered an Acton omnibus, and gave his letter and a shilling to the conductor, with earnest injunctions not to forget to leave it at his mother's house. This busi-

ness despatched, he drew a long breath; the deed was done, the gauntlet thrown down, and instead of feeling awed and conscience-stricken, he experienced a sensation of freedom and relief.

"Now, then," said Leeson, "how shall we amuse ourselves till dinner? What do you say to a game of billiards?"

"I should like it very much; but the fact is, I—I cannot play," replied Bathurst, ready to sink into the ground with shame at the confession, but feeling that it was utterly useless to attempt to conceal his ignorance and deficiency from such a superior being.

"Oh! come, do not be modest," said Leeson. "When a man says he cannot play, I have always found that he is a dangerous customer. However, you know, if I beat you, I can give you points."

"But I assure you that I never played a game at billiards in my life—I doubt if I ever even saw a billiard-table."

Leeson came to a stand-still, and stared with astonishment at his companion.

"Never played a game at billiards! Why, how in the name of all that's boring do you get through the day? I tell you what, just for old time's sake I'll teach you. It seems to be my mission to complete your education. Don't you remember my showing you how to play at cards, and breaking you in to smoking?"

"Indeed, I do; and I have never done either one or the other since."

Leeson, after one or two convulsive efforts to restrain himself, regularly exploded with laughter.

"Excuse me, my dear fellow," he said, when he had recovered himself; "but I could not help it. I have met a good many greenhorns during the last year or two, but hang me if I ever imagined, much less saw, anyone so green as you. The law must be an uncommonly interesting and absorbing study."

"It does require a good deal of attention," replied Bathurst, considerably abashed, but determined to make a clean breast of it once and for all. "And then I live alone with my mother, and am quite out of the way of all amusements."

"Poor beggar!" said Leeson, with true compassion in his voice; and led the way into Regent Street, where a billiard-room was soon found, and William Bathurst had his first lesson.

He was not a dull scholar, and learned to make a good bridge, to balance his cue properly, and to stand in correct position before his ball when he made a stroke. He was also initiated in the mysteries of side, the meaning of the terms cannon, losing, winning, red and white hazards, and their numerical value; and, before he left the room, acquired the art of generally hitting the ball he aimed at. Not bad progress in an hour; and his instructor declared that he was a spoilt Roberts.

Then they returned to the club and had dinner, decidedly the most delicate and appetizing repast that Bathurst had ever sat down to; while, as to the wine, that was indeed nectar! They had Madeira, the first he had ever tasted, with their soup; champagne, refreshingly iced; afterwards a glass or two of port with their cheese; and then a claret, for which the Epicurean was famous. When he had drunk about three times as much as he ever had, at one sitting, before, and still had the pleasing spectacle of a fresh jug on the table, Bathurst began to lose his awe of his host, and felt sufficiently self-confident, easy, and familiar to question him as to his own adventures, position, and prospects, a subject which had not as yet been even distantly alluded to.

"Why, the fact is," said Leeson, helping himself to claret, "I have come rather to grief."

"Dear me!" murmured Bathurst, who was

badly up in slang, pulling a long and sympathetic face, but thinking that grief did not sit heavily on his friend either.

"Yes," continued the other, after taking a mouthful of wine, and leaning back in his chair to catch the full flavour as he swallowed it. "You know I joined the hussars in India; well, there was a cornet who went out with me whom I did not like, a green fellow, just as you might be, only he was not good-natured and teachable, like you, but a surly, sulky brute. I might have known, if I had had my after-experience, that he was hopeless, and never could come to any good, because he would not take his liquor; for if a fellow will not be sociable after he has had his dinner, you may be quite certain he won't at any other time. But I did not know this then, and I tried to make something of him, and got vexed at his stubbornness, and bullied him rather. For I considered that he must have some use in the world—even a mosquito,

you know, is created for some purpose—and as he was evidently not intended by nature as a companion, it was probable that he was meant to be a butt. You may think that the voyage made me cantankerous—it does some people. But, to show that I was not singular in my aversion to the fellow, we had not joined a month before every officer in the regiment felt the same. Well, you may imagine what a nuisance a sulky snob is in a regiment, and how desirable it is to get him out of it. We tried our best, and his life could not have been a very happy one, poor beggar! At last I went too far, I own, for I got his sword, and had the blade taken out of the hilt, and a peacock's feather stuck in the place; and when he went to draw his sword on parade, right in front of the regiment, out came the feather. Well, there was an awful row, and I offered to fight the beggar, but he would not have that, and insisted on reporting the matter, and in the end I had to exchange

into the Lancers to avoid worse. By Jove, that was the regiment for fun! A capital fellow, too, was the colonel, and overlooked a thousand scrapes I got into; but at last I took two months' French leave of absence, after he had refused it me, and that was too much even for him."

"What on earth induced you to do that?"

"Well, it was a foolish business—a love affair. I had to run off with a lady whom I did not care very much for, and who did not care very much for me."

"Then you are married?"

"Oh no, it is not so bad as that; her husband is living, and a Catholic, so he cannot get a divorce."

"Her husband!"

"Ya—as. Very wrong, I own. However, I am glad I did not kill him."

"Kill him?"

"Yes. It is not the custom for Englishmen to fight duels now-a-days; but this chap

was an Irishman, and wanted to fight, and so I accommodated him. It is not usual to aim at a man when you have run away with his wife, so I fired in the air at first; but when the fellow had had two fair shots at me, I thought the matter was getting past a joke, so the third shot I potted him."

"Potted him!" cried Bathurst, in some horror, as there rose before his mental vision, a deceived and slaughtered husband, stored up with pepper and spices in an ornamental jar, with a picture of 'Peace,' or 'War,' or a portrait of the Queen outside, and sold as an excellent substitute for butter at breakfast. "But I thought you said you had not killed him!"

"Oh! no, it did not hurt him much. I dropped him with a shot in the hip-joint, and he had to keep his bed a short time, and is a trifle lame, I hear. I got the worst of it, for I had to sell—and here I am, spending the money I got for my commission."

"Then you are no longer in the army?"

"Not I. Have you got a clerk's place vacant for me in your office?"

"But, seriously, what do you intend to do?"

"Why, I have been thinking of going into a West India regiment, only I like cavalry work so much better, so I have applied for a commission in the Austrian service, and if nothing comes of that I can easily fall back on the other. However, I am pretty flush just now, and it is always time enough to go hunting for the yellow fever when one is hard up. But talking is dry work; let us finish the bottle and go into the smoking-room."

So they finished the bottle, and did go into the smoking-room, where they had coffee and small glasses of brandy, and Bathurst, by his judicious friend's advice, smoked a small and mild queen's very slowly, and, under its benign influence, he conceived a bright idea.

"I say," he cried, somewhat thickly, as

well as suddenly, "let's go to the theatre."

"All right, if you wish it," replied Leeson —"only is not a hot theatre rather a bore?"

"Don't know—never was inside one."

"Never inside a theatre! Exactly, nothing can surprise me after the billiards. Go on. Is there anything else you have never done which the society around you is habitually given to; have you never been drunk, for example?"

"Ne—never!"

"This is positively refreshing! Well, let us go to a theatre by all means, I would not miss the honour of introducing you on any account. I do not often go into any place of public amusement in morning dress, but never mind; we can get a private box cheap so late as this. What is a good theatre to go to? Just hand me the evening paper. Haymarket, —an old comedy, will be half over by now; Princesses, Shakespeare—you have dined too

well to listen to that; Adelphi, a blood and thunder melodrama for the last piece—that's your sort; we shall be just in time, too, to see the beginning of it."

When Bathurst got into the open air he was rather giddy and confused, and was puzzled, on finding himself in a cab, to make out how he got there. Before this question was fairly solved, he had to get out again and stand collecting his wits in a passage, while his companion held a conversation with a nose, an eye, and the brim of a hat on the other side of a pigeon-hole. Then he was advanced into a corridor, where he came to the conclusion that he was intended to take a bath; the number and arrangement of little doors so resembled that of a tepid swimming establishment he was in the habit of patronising, and so firm was this impression, that when the attendant opened one of the portals he held out his hand for the accustomed towels. Instead of these, however, he received a sheet of

thin paper, covered with large black type, which came off on his fingers; and the apartment he was ushered into, though rather like a bath-room in size and general appearance, differed from it in being quite dry, in having four chairs in it, and in possessing a window which looked out on a gay and brilliantly illuminated hall. Drawing the curtains of this frameless unglazed window, and leaning his arms on the sill, Bathurst gazed about. Human faces formed the floor and lined the walls, tier above tier, to the very roof. When he looked to his left, he saw hardly anything in fact but faces, and heads, and necks, and shoulders, which encroached even upon the ceiling, of which there seemed to be a very small portion visible, compared with the size of the building, and that was profusely painted and decorated, and from it depended a large and brilliant chandelier. On turning to his right, however, he found that the seats and galleries terminated abruptly on either side

of a lofty broad and gilded arch, which formed the frame of a gigantic picture. In front of this painting was a boarded floor, which was fringed by a row of gas-lights with shades, so arranged behind them as to throw all the light upon the lower part of the picture, and in a long compartment beneath this row of lights a band of musicians was playing lively dance music.

"Where do they act?—on that strip of boarding in front of the picture?" asked the novice.

"You will see presently," said Leeson, laughing. "This is glorious! I would not have missed it for anything! You are a mine of amusement, old fellow. Now, then, look out."

A bell rang; the picture, to Bathurst's astonishment, rolled mysteriously up, and revealed the interior of a cottage and a girl spinning, with whom the young man fell immediately in love.

"What a magnificent complexion!" exclaimed he.

"Hush! hush! silence!" cried the pit, and he drew back abashed.

But he soon recovered, and took great interest in, though he felt jealous of the sailor lover, and he venerated the heavy father, and burned to denounce the villain, and was getting thoroughly saturated with the interest of the piece, when, to his astonishment and alarm, the walls of the cottage fell all to bits. He recovered, however, when he found that no one was hurt, and that the debris, disappearing as by magic, revealed a forest glade.

It would be tedious to trace his horror at the five murders; his hatred of the seductive villain, his sympathy for the heroine and her father, his joy and satisfaction when virtue was rewarded and vice punished, and the dead reactive blank which fell upon his soul when a black curtain descended. Why cannot we get a few dozen of Lethe, and spend our lives

in going perpetually to the theatre for the first time?

"Well," said Leeson, as they walked along the Strand, drawing in long refreshing breaths of fresh air, and stretching their cramped limbs, "how do you like it!"

"Like it!" replied the other, "the most interesting novel I ever read is nothing to it! But, good heavens! I quite forgot! The last omnibus has gone long ago—and how am I to get home?"

"I suppose you could take a cab; but what do you want to go home for? You had better get a bed in town, or, if you like, I can give you a shake down on my sofa."

The idea of rousing up his mother's quiet household in the middle of the night was so alarming, that Bathurst caught at the latter proposal at once.

"All right," said Leeson. "We'll make a night of it."

And so they did, though it would not

be either amusing or instructive to describe the process. Suffice it that William Bathurst had a good feed of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Evil before five in the morning, the hour at which he finally sank into tipsy slumber.

When Mrs. Bathurst received the note from her son, announcing his intention of dining in town with an old schoolfellow whom he had unexpectedly met, she was paralysed with astonishment and horror; and when she had somewhat recovered herself, went over to Mr. Johnstone, who treated the matter as very trivial and natural, and somewhat soothed her. Upon which, she returned home, and had her dinner brought up, but could not eat it for indignation and alarm; passions which increased in strength as omnibus after omnibus came in without bringing the truant. When the last had arrived, and he was still absent, she at first determined to order a fly, and go and look for him; but reflection upon

the size of the metropolis dissuaded her from this course. So she sat up all night with a ponderous volume of sermons before her, of which she read very little.

## CHAPTER IX.

### WILLIAM BATHURST SNAPS THE APRON-STRING.

When William Bathurst awoke at past ten o'clock on the following day, he thought he was bewitched. He found himself lying on a sofa in a sitting-room, partially undressed, and covered with a railway-rug and a great-coat, by way of bed-clothes. The furniture of the apartment, and the pictures on the walls were unknown to him, and so also was a very dingy old woman, who was sweeping the floor. His head ached in a way which threw all former experiences of that bewildering affliction into the shade. His throat was dry, and parched with thirst; his tongue felt like

a little bit of hard, dry, acidulated leather, and all his joints seemed to be dislocated. By degrees, however, his scattered wits began to collect together in his throbbing brain, and the events of the previous day and night, from his first meeting with Leeson to his coming home with that erratic friend, and making up his present extemporised couch, came back to his memory, though not with the same degree of distinctness; for while he could have deposed clearly enough in a court of justice to all that had occurred up to the period of their leaving the theatre, his recollection of where they had been, and what they had done afterwards, was very misty and confused; and any account he could have given of the same he felt that it would be unpleasant to have to swear to.

The one great and important consideration of the moment, however, was that he now, for the first time in his life, knew what the

meaning of the word thirst was; and the torment was so great as to overcome the excessive lassitude, which made it a greater labour to turn the body or move a limb than it would have been on ordinary occasions to carry a sack of corn up a ladder, and to cause him to roll off his couch the moment the old woman left the room, and make his way to a door which opened into his friend's bed-room. Leeson, who had just awoke, was sitting up in bed, yawning and stretching; but when he saw the other's face, he burst out laughing.

"Hullo, old fellow!" cried he; "what is the matter? Five minutes ago, the ugliest and most miserable face I had ever seen was that of a Hindoo who was going to be hanged, and who turned white with funk; but—by Jove!—you could give him points, and beat him easy. One would say, to look at you, that you had been screwed last night. What are you doing? Let the water jug alone, man;

for goodness sake, don't go wasting a good thirst like that! One moment, and I'll give you something like a drink!"

And taking him back into the sitting-room, he got a couple of bottles of soda-water and one of brandy out of a cupboard, and proceeded to prepare the conventional remedy for over-night excess.

"There," said he, as the other eagerly swallowed the refreshing draught, "that is what we call 'peg' in India."

"Peg!—why do you call it peg?" asked Bathurst, who felt much better when he had finished the tumbler.

"Because every glass you take of it is supposed to be a peg in your coffin," replied Leeson. "But now you had better go down into the street, turn to your left, and keep on till you come to some baths on the other side of the way; have one, and give your clothes out to be brushed while you are in it; then go to the barber's close by, have your hair

well brushed, and get shaved, and by that time I will have breakfast ready."

"Breakfast!—ugh!—I could not touch a bit."

"Nonsense, you will be all right when you have done what I tell you. Can I lend you a clean shirt?"

Bathurst declined this offer, but bought a collar on his way to comply with his friend's injunctions, which he did implicitly, and certainly felt more like himself afterwards than he had ever expected to do again. And then he returned and drank a great many cups of tea, and, to his own astonishment, eventually ate a bloater, and a slice of broiled ham and an egg; after all which, it occurred to him that there was some important business to be attended to at the office; and as his Mentor did not dissuade him from going there, but, on the contrary, affirmed himself to be the last man to countenance any neglect of professional duty, they parted for the present, Leeson

stating his intention of calling for the other at two o'clock, to give him another lesson in billiards, a plan which he had not the slightest notion was in any way inconsistent with that great respect for business habits with which he had just declared himself to be imbued.

Bathurst was not ashamed of himself—quite the contrary; he thought that he had now, for the first time, asserted his manhood and his freedom, and he entered the office with a swagger, which, together with the late hour of his arrival, perplexed the two other articled clerks. They were more astonished when their somewhat mistrusted companion began to talk to them of the pleasures of the metropolis, to ask where they had been, and to announce that he himself had slept in town the night before, and had "kept it up rather." For Bathurst felt that to-day he was the equal, if not the superior, of his fellow-clerks, and no longer regarded them with a timid envy; and his bearing and language reflected

his feelings. His triumph, and the bewilderment of the young men, who had always regarded him as the very softest of existing "muffs," culminated when an imposing military swell strode into the dingy chambers, and crying, "I say, Bathurst, surely you have had enough of those confounded musty parchments for to-day. Come and have a game at billiards," marched him off.

1*st Clerk.* "Well, of all the dark horses!"

2*nd Clerk.* "Well, of all the dashed hypocrites!"

1*st Clerk.* "Why, what an actor the fellow would make!"

2*nd Clerk.* "But what could have induced him to humbug *us* all these years?—and why has he thrown off the mask so suddenly?"

1*st Clerk.* "Oh! he was afraid that his Uncle Horace would not let him into the partnership so soon if he knew how he was carrying on, and would not trust even us.

Now he thinks the matter is safe and settled."

2*nd Clerk.* "I say, old Bathurst will not be here to-day, now—suppose we follow a good example?"

1*st Clerk.* "All right. If young Bathurst and his swell friend had been decently civil, we might have had a four pool." [*Exeunt.*]

"Well, and how do you feel now?" asked Leeson, directly he was alone with his friend and pupil.

"Better," replied Bathurst. "But I am rather queer still."

"Ah! I know what you want, a basin of mulligatawny and a glass of sherry. I should be none the worse for some such refreshment myself."

So they took that stimulating luncheon, and afterwards Bathurst received his second lesson in billiards, and got on far enough to play a game, after a fashion, Leeson giving him nearly all in points, and telling him, at

every stroke, what to play for, and how to play for it. And then, at his usual hour, the truant walked off to his omnibus, and went home to Acton, fully determined not to sink again into the slavery from which his newly-found friend had emancipated him. His resolutions waned, however, as he neared his mother's house, and had Mrs. Bathurst been pathetic or ill she might easily have brought him in a penitential state to her feet; but, unfortunately, she took the high and indignant line, the very one which the youth, big with the importance he felt at being treated by so great a person, as he esteemed Leeson, as a friend and an equal, found it most easy to resist. Thus, when the servant who opened the door for him exclaimed, "Lawk! Master William, where have you been? Missis is in such a taking, she has not been to bed all night!" his heart smote him, and, as he entered the room where his mother sat, he was meditating a soothing and apologetic

speech, which was scattered to the four winds by the first glimpse he caught of her. She was perched upon her chair in her stiffest and most uncomfortable attitude, with her strongest Calvinistic expression acidulating her brow and mouth, and the first words with which she greeted him were,

"Well, William, what do you mean by this conduct?"

And so he was actually driven into self-defence—just as the reader, if suddenly and violently attacked by some renowned prize-fighter, might engage in a combat which, if fairly warned and challenged, he would have been at some considerable pains to avoid.

"What conduct, mamma?" he replied, affecting surprise. "Did you not get my letter?"

"Of course I did; and unutterably shocked and surprised I was on receiving it. How *dare* you stop in London without my leave?"

"Upon my word, mamma, you are too

bad! Just because I am a good son, and generally try to please you, you treat me as a child."

"Enough!"

"But I won't stand it any longer. The idea of making such a fuss because I stopped in town one night to dine with an old friend, who had just returned from India!"

"Enough, I say! Jane is coming, and I will not have my servants hear your awful language."

When Jane came in, she announced that dinner was ready, and mother and son went into the next room and ate the uncomfortable meal in surly silence. What a contrast for William Bathurst to the dinner of yesterday! He was glad to get away, and walk over to the Johnstones; but Mary was distressed about the rupture between her brother and father, and the sudden alteration of the position which the latter wished Minnie to hold in the family, so that she was not in her usual

spirits, and he had a dull evening of it, and more than ever regretted that he could not be with his companion of the night before.

Mrs. Bathurst hoped and trusted that her son would see the error of his ways and humbly "come round," and ask pardon when he returned home that evening, or, at all events, before he left for town on the following morning. But he remained impenitent, and when they met in the breakfast-room, and he went up, according to custom, to kiss her, she drew herself up and averted her head, which hardened the rebel yet more. And so he went off on the omnibus with his heart full of a feeling not unlike enmity to the mother who cared for no other object on earth but him, and who spent the entire day in weeping and praying over him, and repaired to his office; but, finding work rather dull and distasteful in his present mood, soon left and made his way to Leeson's lodgings. The ex-dragoon was in, not having long finished

breakfast in fact, and hailed his appearance with pleasure.

"Well, my unsophisticated friend," said he, "my buttercup, whose freshness neither law dust nor city smoke has been able to taint, what do you purpose doing to-day?"

"Why, I thought if it did not bore you too much, I should like to have another lesson in billiards."

"Bore me? Not at all. I have set my heart upon drawing out that innate talent you possess for making winning hazards, and then we will agitate the pools of the metropolis together considerably. We will go and have a game presently. But what shall we do afterwards? It is a warm day; suppose we go down the river and dine at Greenwich?"

"It would be very good fun," replied Bathurst; "but I had sooner let my mother know in the morning when I intend to dine out; and, besides, it is a bother to get back all

the way to Acton at night, the last omnibus leaves so early."

"Then sleep in town. Why don't you get a bed-room somewhere and join a club? You would be ever so much freer."

"I think I must do something of the kind when I am a partner in the business and have an income of my own; but to tell the truth, my mother keeps me rather close as far as money matters are concerned, on purpose, I believe, to make me stop at home, and I should not be able to manage at present."

"Ah! my dear fellow, that money," moralized Leeson. "'The want of money is the root of all evil.' But surely you could, with your prospects, raise the wind somehow or another."

"Raise the wind?"

"Yes, beg, bag, or borrow the wherewithal. I know a fellow, none of your grasping blood-suckers, but a fair-dealing man, who only charges ten per cent. when the security is good. I will introduce you if you like."

But Bathurst, in consequence of what had constantly come before his eyes in the study and pursuit of his profession, was less innocent about the perils and disasters attending stamped paper transactions than in other matters, and shrank from taking the first step in the ruinous course proposed to him.

"I think," said he, "that I could raise a small sum without going to the Jews. My Uncle Horace has been very generous to me from time to time, making me presents of a ten pound note or so on my birthdays, and this money has always been put into a savings-bank by my mother, but in my own name, to teach me habits of economy. There must be upwards of a hundred pounds there now; and, as I am of age, I have no doubt I can draw it out without her knowing anything about it."

"Capital! And when that is gone, you will be pretty near the time when you expect to be independent. Anyhow, a man with a

hundred in his pocket is a king for to-day; and hang to-morrow—we may never live to see it."

"Yes, I think I can manage that," pursued Bathurst, not attending to his friend's philosophy; "and then I will hire a bedroom near here, and take some linen and things to it."

"Exactly," said Leeson; "and then you had better have some clothes made. Excuse me, my dear fellow, but you are horribly dressed! I will take you to my own tailor, if you like; he might possibly refuse to make for you if you went alone, but he will do anything for me."

"Thank you!" cried Bathurst, with real and heartfelt gratitude.

He was rather staggered, though, when they shortly afterwards paid a visit to Mr. Swelsnip, by the wholesale character of that artist's transactions. Three coats, five pair of trousers, and half-a-dozen waistcoats, was the smallest order he would condescend to

execute; and the happy prospective possessor of such a wardrobe wondered what on earth he should ever do with it, while Leeson was delighted with his perplexity.

"Do with it?" cried the spendthrift—"why, if you have more coats and trousers than you want, you can sell them, when you are hard up, to the second-hand dealers; you need not pay Swelsnip, you know, for years. 'Large profits and slow returns,' that is his motto."

Bathurst ordered his new clothes to be sent, when completed, to a room he had engaged in Duke Street, whither, on the following day, he also took some linen and toilet necessaries; and then, having drawn out the money he spoke of, he was in a position to sleep in town any night he chose. And he chose to do so with increasing frequency. On two alternate nights; on two nights in succession; on three ditto, ditto; and then he did not return home for a week.

Mrs. Bathurst was in despair. Mr. Johnstone, occupied with his own domestic discomforts, said something about the corruption of the human heart, but suggested non-interference. Mrs. Johnstone hinted delicately that if Mrs. Bathurst were not so harsh and strict, her son would not run away from her. Mary thought her lover's conduct very odd, but concluded that he was working very hard to render himself marriageable, and found returning to Acton every evening interfere with his labours. Then the disconsolate mother travelled up to town, and paid a visit to Mr. Horace Bathurst, who was confined to his house by indisposition, and sought counsel of him. He was affected by a singular inertness and repugnance to exertion or worry of any kind, but did his utmost to shake this off, and give his sister-in-law the best counsel and advice he could on the occasion.

"I think I know William," he said. "He

is a lad of strong affections, and easily led, and how it is that he has so suddenly resisted your influence, I cannot quite explain. Still, you know, you have kept him very strictly, and he has been working hard. He is to engage in the business on his own account in a few weeks, and it is very likely that he is determined to have one holiday before he settles down seriously to the labour of his life. If you had shown him a moderate indulgence, he would no doubt have consulted you upon the matter, or, at all events, he would have taken you into his confidence; but as you condemn all recreation and amusement in the lump, he avoids you altogether while he is having his little carnival. Of course he must at the same time be subject to some influence which is hostile to your own, or he would not be able to break through the bonds in which you have hitherto held him so suddenly and decidedly."

"Hostile influence!" cried the unhappy

mother—"do you think there may be a creature at the bottom of all this?"

"I suspect that such a solution of the matter would not be so very far from the truth," replied Uncle Horace, with difficulty restraining a smile; "I should fear he would be rather susceptible——"

"He shall be married to Mary Johnstone at once!" cried the alarmed Mrs. Bathurst, and then, mindful of the cookery-book and the uncaught hare, she added, "Where do you think I shall find him?"

"If I might suggest," said Mr. Bathurst, "I should strongly, very strongly, recommend you to let him alone, and wait quietly till he comes home of his own accord. He must do so soon, for he cannot have much money."

"Only five pounds, as far as I know."

"Well, then, his credit will not extend far, and he must be back almost directly. If you go about searching for him you will humiliate and exasperate him."

And he finally persuaded her to go home quietly to Acton, where she presently fretted herself ill. As for William, her son, he left off going to the office; he never went near Acton; he wore his fine new feathers and thought himself a fine bird; he was inseparable from his friend Leeson, and if poor Miss Beebee, the anti-aspirative instructress of his early days, could have been informed as to how her former pupil was spending his days and nights, she would have said that "Master Bathurst's 'abbits" were getting very bad indeed.

The influence gained over Bathurst by Leeson in so short a time was most extraordinary, and was owing to two causes—the comfort which the coerced and hardworking young lawyer experienced in being prompted and encouraged by a stronger mind to taste pleasures for which he had long been secretly pining, but which he had shrunk from plucking on his own responsibility; and the wonder

and gratitude he felt that so superior a being should not only honour him with his friendship, but should bestow his time and companionship almost exclusively upon him. And it did seem singular that a man who had seen a great deal of the world for his age, who belonged to a good club, had a rather imposing address, was in no apparent want of money, was handsome, must have met a great many men at school and in the army, who were now in London, and who had certainly no lack of assurance, should have struck up such a close friendship with one so different in many respects, and of a spirit apparently so uncongenial. But the reasons were several and simple. William was not by any means a dull companion when he had once broken through his shyness; Leeson had always liked him; the ignorance of the world's ways which he displayed amused him beyond everything, and his pride was tickled by perpetually playing first fiddle, and having an auditor at his

elbow ready to applaud every note. Besides all which, the manner in which he had left the army was not very creditable to him, less so, indeed, than he had allowed to appear in the account which he gave to William; and he had found, on his return to England, that his old friends were inclined to look rather shyly upon him. So that the close friendship he formed with Bathurst was not that excessive compliment which the latter imagined it.

## CHAPTER X.

### MINNIE COOK GOES TO SCHOOL.

THAT peculiar state of the mind in which one human being finds itself compelled to concentrate its affections upon another of an opposite sex, and which we call love, varies in its attributes of calmness, rationality, and absorption of all other feelings and passions, according to the amount of imagination mixed up with it. Love at first sight is simply the embodiment of an ideal character of our own in the face and person of the object of our sudden infatuation, who may not resemble the image we picture to ourselves in any one particular; in which case, a leisurely repentance is only

too likely to be the result of a hasty marriage; while a love which has grown upon us slowly and imperceptibly, during a long period of intimacy with the person for whom we feel it, is, though less spasmodic, much more likely to endure, as, indeed, if it does not last through life, the fault cannot be attributed to the disappointment consequent upon the bursting of a cherished illusion, but must be placed to the account of some inherent fickleness in the mind which changes.

Mary Johnstone had a real and warm attachment to William Bathurst; but it was not the romantic hero-worship of a girl for a lover whom she has only known for a short time, and under favourable circumstances, and whom she considers to be the bravest, cleverest, handsomest, least selfish of men. No, Mary knew the character of the man she was willing, some day, to marry, well enough; knew his want of energy, his tendency to self-indulgence, his proneness to neglect any

duty which was distasteful, to discount future interests for the peace and quietness of the moment, and to purchase the good humour of anyone he happened to be with, by following his lead, too careless whether it were in a good or a bad direction. I do not mean to say that she ever put it to herself plainly, and in so many words, that such was his character; but having grown up with him from infancy, she was aware of it all the same, and liked him none the worse; as we do not dislike those with whom we are intimate, or to whom we are used, for any faults and failings which are not of an unamiable nature; and we often condemn or jeer at strangers for traits of character which appear quite natural, and not particularly objectionable in members of our own family. Of course, she thought him rather better than he was; pure-minded women always treat their lovers, brothers, husbands, and fathers in that charitable manner—bless them for it! we should be a great deal worse if

they did not—but that was because she was ignorant of the workings of the human heart, and not from any bandage thrown over her eyes by the god whom the ancients represented as blind.

Being in love, then, in this calm, sober, and comfortable manner, she did not indulge in any fits of jealous indignation at William Bathurst's neither coming to see her, nor writing for a whole week. She heard with sorrow that he had quarrelled with his mother, and had gone to stay, as was believed and stated by that lady, with a friend in London ; she also thought it rather odd that he had not communicated with herself, seeing that he was accustomed to consult her upon everything he did. She concluded, however, that Mrs. Bathurst had exercised her authority in some manner so coercive that even the calm spirit of William had revolted against it, and that he had gone off in a tiff with all mankind, and was solacing himself by an utter absorption

in legal studies, but that he would come back in a repentant state in a day or two.

Perhaps, as the most Platonical love is highly resentful of anything like a slight, she might not have considered the matter so calmly, had it not been that her attention was so much engrossed by the far more serious disturbances in her own home. There seemed to be something in the air hostile to the relations between parents and children; for while her lover was rebelling against the authority of his mother, her brother had come to something very like an open rupture with his father.

When Harry Johnstone had bidden goodbye to his mother, sister, and Minnie, he returned to Oxford, with the intention of taking his name off the boards on the very day he came of age, preparatory to seeking to earn his living in some more rapid manner than he could by entering one of the learned professions, except in the highly-improbable

event of his father's altering his intentions with regard to Minnie Cook, by consenting to her remaining an inmate of his house, as she had hitherto done, or continuing Harry's own allowance after he had married her. And now he wrote daily either to Minnie, his mother, or his sister, and what with consultations over his letters, and the task of sympathising with and consoling the young girl, who was to her as a sister, and who was now for the first time to be taken from her, and sent away to school, Mary Bathurst had enough to occupy her.

It must be urged, on behalf of Mr. Johnstone, that he had the decency to be somewhat ashamed of himself; and he showed this by avoiding, as much as possible, all intercourse with the orphan girl, towards whom he was not behaving with that Christian benevolence and impulsive generosity which it was his desire that his fellow-creatures should consider as the salient points of his character.

Every communication of his will was made, therefore, through his wife, who, though disapproving of her husband's conduct, allowed herself to be made the passive agent of his purposes. For Mr. Johnstone had established himself as a despot in his own house, and Mrs. Johnstone never for a moment dreamt of open revolt, though she was perfectly ready to enter into any secret conspiracy on behalf of the girl whom she had grown accustomed to reckon as one of her children. She had, she was aware, done all she could to encourage the match between Harry and Minnie, and could not find it in her heart or conscience to turn right round and set her face dead against it. The course of temperate remonstrance with her husband had been tried, and met with a fierce threat that he would turn the girl out of his house, and do nothing more for her whatever, if he met with opposition; and as the good lady was not aware how little he dare carry such a threat into

execution, she was driven into dissimulation.

It was to his wife, then, and not to the girl herself, that Mr. Johnstone conveyed the information one morning that he had made arrangements with the Misses Stifton, who kept a girl's school at Clifton, near Bristol, for the reception of Minnie in their establishment, to which Mrs. Johnstone was to take her early in the following week.

"You will make her understand," he added, "that I am acting solely in her interest; she will have to gain her livelihood by engaging in the task of tuition; and as she is hardly competent at present to practise—to —to, in fact, to go out as a governess, I hope that she will make the best use of her time, and take advantage of the opportunities which, with a generosity which is not entirely called for, I place within her reach. You had likewise better point out to her that if she has not been hitherto brought up with an especial view to her having to instruct others, it is

because I was deceived as to her future prospects and expectations; and if she finds it hard now to give up suddenly all idea of being a fine lady, she has only her father to thank for the disappointment. I am a hard working man, with enough to do to provide for my own family. I cannot support other men's children in idleness, even if there were no other reasons for her not remaining an inmate of my house."

And so Mr. Johnstone, fearing an appeal which the girl was far too high-spirited to make, never mentioned the matter before her till the day appointed for her departure, when, after a breakfast taken in solemn and somewhat awkward silence, he rose from the table at his usual omnibus time, and held out his hand.

"Good-bye, Miss Cook. You are now going amongt strangers, to fit yourself for that struggle with the world which is the lot of all those who have to earn their own living.

You have had more advantages than young persons in your position are often favoured with; and I trust you will never forget the precepts and examples of industry and piety which have been set continually before you since you have been a member of this household. Make a good use of your time, and pay attention to the instructions and wishes of the exemplary ladies under whose care you are to be this day placed; and when you are fitted to engage in the pleasing and useful task of tuition, I will take care to find a suitable situation for you—a service which you, in your inexperience, may consider light and easy, but which, without my assistance, you would find it exceedingly difficult to perform for yourself, though the respect in which I am held by men of high position in the land will enable me to render it to you with comparative facility."

"I shall never forget," replied Minnie, quietly rising and taking the proffered hand

—"I shall never forget the kindness which I have received under this roof; for the present and future I am helpless and must do what I can—not what I wish. I have only one request to make you, and that is, that you will let me know at once if ever you hear anything more of my poor father, however distressing the news may be."

"Of course, certainly," replied Mr. Johnstone; "the omnibus is due; once more, good-bye."

"Good-bye," and he took his departure.

Then the three ladies and the housemaid performed that bustling, dusty, heating, memory-trying, muscle-straining, bewildering ceremony—finishing the packing; and an hour afterwards a fly drove up to the door, and when Minnie and Mary had kissed and wept over each other for a good ten minutes, the former got into the vehicle, where Mrs. Johnstone, several band-boxes, and a large nosegay were already stowed away, and was

driven to the Hanwell Station of the Great Western Railway, only just in time for the train, the leavetaking having caused so much delay.

Mary, left alone in the house, with the sense that her friend was gone entirely, that her mother would not return till the following day, and that there was the prospect of a *tête-à-tête* with her father, with whom she was not very well pleased that evening, had a regular good cry; and then, when she was tired of the pump business, she wrote a minute account of everything which everybody in the house had said, done, or looked on that eventful morning and the previous evening, for the edification of her brother. When the letter was finished she put on her bonnet and posted it herself, and then went to call on Mrs. Bathurst, whom she was shocked to find really ill. Her son had now absented himself from home for several successive days, without giving her any other intimation of where

he was, or what he was about, than that contained in a hurried note, stating that, as he had several engagements that week, he thought it better to take a lodging for a few days than to put her household arrangements out by returning home late at night; and the constant worry and anxiety of mind which this conduct had given her, had brought on an attack of her complaint. Mary sent one of the servants for the medical man, and remained all the afternoon with the sick lady, only returning home in time for her father's dinner. She also wrote to William, telling him that his mother was unwell, and he must come home at once; and as he had not mentioned where his present lodging was, directed her letter to the office.

In the meantime, Mrs. Johnstone and Minnie arrived at Bristol, and then exchanged the flying railway carriage for a torpid fly, and proceeded to crawl between the most picturesque and dirtiest houses they had ever

seen, across a magnificent open square, the sides of which were warehouses, public buildings, and churches, and the centre a maze of docks and drawbridges, up a street so steep that they expected every minute to see the horse perform a somerset over their heads, and so eventually to Clifton.

The establishment for young ladies kept by the Misses Stifton was a good-sized semi-detached house on the Downs; the small garden in front and rear of the building was environed by such a very high wall that the view from the windows of the rooms on the ground floor was exceedingly contracted, but from the bedrooms the prospect was delightful, embracing the Avon, winding along between the Lee woods, the broad expanse of the Bristol channel, and, in very clear weather, a distant glimpse of the blue Welsh hills. The air was healthy and invigorating, as was natural on such high ground, and altogether the first impression of the place upon the stranger

was pleasing, in spite of the dull appearance of the high wall round the small garden, and the chilling effect of the unscholastic half of the building, the other semi-detachment being closely shut up, the chimneys smokeless, the shutters and doors in great need of paint, the broken windows unmended; a dead Siamese twin still joined to its living brother. But what superficial influence of that description could take the giggle out of twenty girls aged from twelve to eighteen?

On entering the hall, Mrs. Johnstone, who went first, found herself confronted by a lady of imposing appearance. Imposing—vague? Well, perhaps it is. Let me try to explain what I mean by the term. She was past forty, five feet eight and a half, very erect, full-blown—might one be permitted the use of the vulgar expression, "crummy"? Her hair was black and plentiful, and the cap she wore sat upon it like a crown; her nose was aquiline, her mouth firm, her chin double;

she wore a rustling rich black silk dress, with a gold chain meandering over it, and she also used a gold eye-glass. That is what I call an imposing woman, with nothing about her to detract from the effect, so that she probably had an artistic eye. Spectacles, now, would have spoilt her, while an eye-glass made her almost solemn; it is the little touches which make or mar all. This commanding figure began sinking, sinking until it nearly sat on the door-mat, and then slowly rose again with a backward curve, and finally stood once more erect. Such a curtsy! Her visitor tried to salute as profoundly as she could in return, but was up again before the other had culminated.

"Mrs. Johnstone, I presume?"

"Yes."

"I am Miss Sappho Stifton; be pleased to walk into the drawing-room. This is the young lady who is to be entrusted to our care? How do you do, my dear? I have

no doubt you will be well and comfortable here. Admirable situation, ma'am, is it not? Fine air, and the best masters from Bristol—music, French, drawing, dancing on alternate days. A very *comme il faut établissement* of ours this, I can assure you; and we finish a young lady just as well as they do at the Rhodolentia Mansion on the other side of the Downs, where they charge three hundred a year for each pupil. Your interesting ward, ma'am, is desirous, as I understand from Mr. Johnstone's letter, of engaging shortly herself in the grand *œuvre* of tuition—she could not have been entrusted to our care at a better time for learning how to fit herself for the task, and for forwarding her future interests, as we have several scions of most aristocratic houses at present in our *petite famille*. For instance, there is Miss Higginbottom, the daughter of Lady Higginbottom, a most amiable girl, who, I have no doubt, would be able to obtain an admirable situation for any

school-fellow for whom she conceived a friendship. My sister, Miss Jane Stifton, is not in at present—I hope you will excuse her not paying her *devoirs* to you."

The good lady rattled on in this way at such a pace that Mrs. Johnstone had some difficulty in putting in the few leading questions she wished to ask relative to the domestic arrangements and comforts of the school, all of which seemed to be under the management of the other and non-forthcoming sister; however, she gained what information she could, and finally took her leave, not over and above satisfied.

When she was gone, and Minnie was left alone in the drawing-room with her schoolmistress, she was rather distressed, as a girl finding herself for the first time amongst strangers naturally would be; but Miss Sappho's manner was kind and reassuring, though not excessively delicate.

"There, there, my dear," said she; "don't

take on so. You will be very happy and comfortable here. Is Mrs. Johnstone your aunt?"

"No," replied Minnie. "She is no relation at all; but she has brought me up from infancy, and I look upon her as a mother."

"Ah! then you have lost your own—poor thing! And is your father living?"

While Minnie was explaining her position and relations with the Johnstone family, the door suddenly opened, and a shrill voice cried,

"I do declare, Sappho, it is too bad!—there's the beer gone sour again, and it has not been on draught a week. Maltstingy says that if we give a shilling a gallon it will keep longer; but as I say to him, 'Tenpence is plenty,' says I; 'we don't want to give the girls a taste for drinking,' says I. Ah! the new pupil—how do you do, miss? Another grown up one, I declare! Well, if

the big ones give more trouble in some matters, Providence balances all things, and they eat less than the little ones. Is your appetite good, miss?"

The person who put this unexpected query was a little woman of considerable pretensions to ugliness. She had weak eyes, a nose which presented its nostrils like port-holes at the beholder, a mouth of great width, a shapeless figure, and the right leg shorter than the other, though, as if to illustrate her own theory of Providential balancing, the latter defect was compensated for by a corresponding elevation of the left shoulder. This Venus Antipodes had no recourse to art for the disguise of her natural defects; her false front of corkscrew curls was the ugliest which could have been selected; her large cap must have been made up for her by a milliner given to practical jokes; and the defects of her ill-fitting, shabby, maroon-coloured stuff gown were brought into strong relief by a bran-

new silk apron of bright green; while her hands, which were the only well-made and handsome portions of her body, were always carefully hidden away in old kid gloves half a dozen sizes too large for her, and so worn and stained that it was impossible to guess at their original tint.

This was Miss Jane Stifton, who managed all the household affairs, but never meddled with the school business, or made her appearance before parents or guardians. In fact, Sappho was the schoolmistress, and her sister the housekeeper.

The appearance and address of this singular creature was of great use to Minnie in recovering her cheerfulness, as there was something so irresistibly odd about the poor old thing that a far duller sense of humour than hers would have been tickled by the apparition; and she was presently in sufficient spirits to undergo introduction to her schoolfellows.

There were only two old enough to be her companions—Miss Polly Higginbottom, who was a romp, and Miss Clarissa Tucker, who was romantic; and Minnie, who was a nice, frank, winning girl, was very good friends with both of them in half an hour, though, as they were rather dull by nature, and as their early education had been sadly neglected, the new comer established a decided and instinctive superiority over them at once. The younger children naturally looked up to a grown woman; and so she, who had been all her life the youngest member of the family in which she lived, and had been consequently accustomed to defer to others, found herself suddenly in a position to advise and patronise those about her, which was not altogether unpleasant.

Minnie was sharp enough to find out very soon that Mr. Johnstone had merely sent her to school to get her out of the way for a time, until he should find an opportunity of placing

her in some situation as a governess, and not, as he professed, with any definite idea of completing her education; for had such been his principal object, he would have made stricter inquiries into the qualifications of the Miss Stiftons for accomplishing it, which, in truth, were *nil*.

The fact was that Mr. Johnstone had been attracted by one quality, and one quality only, of this third-rate Clifton seminary; and that was its cheapness. The charges certainly were uncommonly reasonable, and how so many professors of various arts could be engaged for the money was a puzzle to the uninitiated, who were not aware that the French, Italian, drawing, music, and dancing masters were all united in one gifted individual, who had also, at a former period of his restless existence, been a courier, and who was not so proficient in any one of the things he undertook to teach, except French, which was his native language, as Minnie Cook herself.

Let me be accurate. There was another branch of instruction imparted by the professor to his pupils, of which Minnie had hitherto been entirely ignorant. On the second morning after her arrival she heard a great deal of laughing in the garden at the back of the house, and going to the spot found the ten eldest girls ranged in a line before the body of an old hackney coach, propped up on trestles to the height at which it was wont to stand in the palmy days when it had wheels, and M. Jean Toutmetier separately handing the members of his class in at one door, and then skipping lightly round to the other side, elegantly aiding them to descend on the other. The laughter was caused by the obstreperous conduct of Miss Higginbottom, who entered the carriage in the most affected and mincing manner, but jumped out with a bounce at the other door before the professor, agile as he was, had time to get round to hand her down the steps.

But I may be excused for nearly having forgotten this teaching of the accomplishment of getting in and out of a carriage in my enumeration of the items of instruction, which were not better understood by Minnie than by the teacher whose business it was to impart them to her, seeing that it entirely escaped the notice of Miss Sappho Stifton herself, who was somewhat perplexed when she found what an accomplished pupil she had got to put the finishing touches to, and felt much in the position of that artist who had a lily brought him to be painted a little whiter. Being an honest woman, her first impulse was to write to Mr. Johnstone, and tell him fairly that she could do nothing for the young lady; but being also a poor one, to whom a pupil was an object, she reflected further, and came to the conclusion that the gentleman probably knew what he was about, and that his only wish was that Miss Cook should have a home for a time in a respectable house, where, if

she got no particular good, she would, at any rate, come to no harm. Still the good lady felt an awkwardness at seeing the pupil take her place in a class which she was more competent to teach than the instructor, though, at the same time, she saw the danger of giving her free leave to dispose of her own time as she pleased; and she was quite delighted, therefore, when she hit upon a plan which she thought would be equally beneficial to all parties concerned. Directly this notable idea occurred to her, she sought out Minnie, drew her mysteriously into the drawing-room—as the one apartment in the house which was reserved for the sole use of the sister mistresses was called—and expounded it to her thus:

"When the gentleman who has charge of you asked me by letter whether I could receive you into my establishment, merely mentioning that you had been entrusted to his care by a gentleman in the East, I expected to have to deal with a rude, spoilt, and

ignorant person, who had not been taught the rudiments of the common subjects of a young lady's education."

Here Miss Jane Stifton entered the room, and Minnie offered to rise.

"Oh! never mind my sister. Sit down, Jane!" said Sappho. "I judged thus, because Mr. Johnstone entered into no explanations, and the only pupil who had come to us in a similar manner knew absolutely nothing, and, though she was sixteen, had to go into the youngest class."

"But she kept the whole school in pine-apple jam and guava jelly!" cried Miss Jane.

"You, on the contrary," continued Miss Sappho, "have had the advantage of better masters than we can afford to employ, for though it does not do to own as much to the public, yet——"

"Never cry 'stinking fish,' you know," observed Miss Jane.

"*Yet*," continued Miss Sappho, merely re-

buking the interruption by an emphasis, "we do not really mean to profess to undertake the higher branches of feminine education—a fact which we conceive to be patent from the low character of our charges, and which is generally so well understood from that symptom, that we have never had a pupil who had previously received any good instruction sent to us before. This may seem inconsistent with what I said the other day to the lady who accompanied you here, but——"

"But the parents will have lies told 'em, though they knows 'em to be such! And what is one to do with pupils falling off, and mutton at the present prices, not to mention the income-tax, which it drives one wild to think of."

"Pray do not interrupt me, Jane, while I am developing my ideas to Miss Cook. It has struck me, then, that as there is a wide difference between the possession of knowledge and the power of imparting it to others, and

as you are destined to the latter work, you may spend your time profitably while an inmate of this establishment, by taking the opportunity of acquiring the art. Suppose you were to take a class, and, in a light and friendly way, were to see if you could instruct it in any branch which you liked to select, eh?"

Minnie had anything but a taste for teaching, and this proposition for her to become an amateur governess did not exactly meet her wishes. She also had wit enough to see that though Miss Sappho only alluded to the benefit of the plan to herself, she would not be doing a bad stroke of business on her own account if she got a governess who, instead of receiving a salary, paid *her*. However, as the poor girl was rather destitute of friends, and this seemed to be a good opportunity of adding to her collection of those useful articles, and as, moreover, she was particularly anxious, for reasons of her own, to conciliate

those in whose power she found herself, she acceded to the proposal, and entered upon a task which proved to be even more irksome than she had anticipated. She was, to a certain extent, repaid, however, by becoming a general favourite, which is always pleasant, no matter who or what it is, fellow-creature, bird, or beast, that shows a liking to us. Miss Sappho Stifton liked her because she had fallen in with her plan; Miss Jane because her appetite was small; the girls whom she taught because, while she was always ready to do her best for those who wished to learn, she did not consider it part of her business to interfere with those who rather preferred to be idle, and therefore never either inflicted punishments herself, or reported delinquents to the mistress. The two elder girls were remarkably fond of her, because she was a sympathising confidante; and Clarissa Tucker would pour into her ear by the hour the details of a hopeless passion, of which she was

the victim; while Polly Higginbottom confided to her the fact that her father had been knighted for cheating his fellow-creatures in the sale of tea and mustard, and that her lady mother had, at an earlier period of her career, sold tripe in Holborn.

But, delightful as it was to be made the recipient of such interesting confessions, Minnie was disappointed about one thing. She had hoped that, when womanised by the position of a teacher, she would receive her letters unopened; whereas Miss Sappho continued to break the seals, and glance at the contents of her epistles in the same way as she did those of the other girls; and when, on the first favourable opportunity, she adverted to the matter, she was told that it was done at Mr. Johnstone's express desire.

## CHAPTER XI.

### WHY MR. COOK SENT NO MORE REMITTANCES.

It is recorded in the archives of Burmah that, once upon a time, in the good old days before the horde of Europeans which overruns the land in these degenerate times, had appeared to corrupt the people with new fangled notions, hostile to the creed and customs of their forefathers, the royal city was thrown into a state of great excitement by the approach of a merchant of enormous wealth and energy. The reports which preceded him from the seaport town where he had passed the customs, and transferred his treasures from a ponderous ship to vessels of lighter draught, which might

pass up the river, were astounding as regarded his appearance, his wisdom, his generosity, and, above all, his possessions, so that the whole population of Amerapoorah crowded down to the landing-place when the expected flotilla hove in sight. The merchant, however, refused to trade until he had prostrated himself before the king, and demanded his protectection and favour; and for that purpose he prayed for an audience of his majesty, which the potent and terrible monarch graciously accorded. The stranger, who was fair of complexion, but who was dressed in the costume, and spoke the language of the country, laid such magnificent offerings at the feet of the king and his august spouses, as inclined the monarch to look upon him with favour; nor was he neglectful of the collateral branches of the royal family, nor of the ministers of state. When he had secured the good offices of all those who had the power to thwart or injure him, he commenced the

business of a trader, and wonderful were the wares which he disposed of to the eager purchasers who flocked to his stores:—knives which would cut like the sword of the destroying angel, clothes of a fineness of texture and brilliancy and variety of colour which had never been seen before in Burmah; guns which would kill at a fabulous distance, which generally went off on the first pulling of the trigger, and which rarely burst; instruments which, when looked through, made far things come near; needles which rendered the task of sewing a hundred-fold more easy; and many other articles which added to the comforts of life. And when this great merchant's stores were exhausted, he bought certain products of the country, and sent them down to the coast, where they were taken on board big ships, which sailed away, and then came back again with a fresh supply of the goods which the Burmese desired. And not only did this merchant buy and sell, but by reason of his

wisdom, and the power he had of saying "This man talks nonsense, and that man talks sense," at once, and without taking a long time for cogitation, he became a great favourite with the king, who paid him honour, and consulted him in all the affairs of state. And he went on, increasing in wealth and influence, until an insignificant foreign people, called the English, had the audacity to defy the king, and they went to war with him, and sent ships which possessed the power of continually launching thunderbolts all day and night, to destroy his forts and cities, and soldiers to attack his invincible Burmese armies, and men with stirring words to incite his Pegu subjects to rebellion. And while the king was in great wrath for all these things, it was told him that the merchant was none other than an Englishman; therefore the king caused him to be tortured, and when he confessed that he belonged to that abominable people, he was thrust into prison, and no more was heard of him.

If any Burmese archives are stored up in Ava, and if I had access to them, I have little doubt but what I should find some such account as the above of the career of Mr. Cook in that country; but it would end with his disappearance, the secrets of Asiatic prisons being well kept by the natives; so that, in consequence of the peculiar affliction which befell the ill-fated merchant, there has been great difficulty in gleaning even the most meagre account of what befell him, from the moment of his arrest to the day when he arrived, a broken and shattered man, at Calcutta, on his way to England.

That his life was preserved, and a considerable portion of his property ultimately saved from the general wreck, seems to have been owing to Swai-ee, the intelligent and enterprising Burmese who had originally suggested the undertaking, which, had it not been for the unfortunate interposition of war, would have been so entirely successful.

When an Asiatic once attaches himself to a European, his devotion often surpasses the wildest dreams of chivalrous romance; and Swai-ee must have perilled his life again and again to save that of his friend and partner. For it was really in this capacity that he had accompanied Mr. Cook to Amerapoorah, though, at his own desire, he had assumed the more humble position of head-clerk and obedient servant. For the astute Indian considered that, while it was necessary to the success of the firm that one member should acquire power and influence, and bask in the sun of the royal favour, it was no less desirable that the other should seek rather to avoid notice—that, in case the despot should take a fancy, in some sudden fit of rage, jealousy, greed, or caprice, to wring the neck of the goose which laid the golden eggs, there might be one left to work for the concealment and partial preservation of the common property and the rescue—always possible to the

rich in a land where every official exists by bribery—of his partner.

The wisdom of this course became apparent when Mr. Cook was suddenly arrested, for Swai-ee, the humble servant, attracted no attention, and was so enabled to convey property of great value to a place of safety; and though he was not able to gain any access to the prisoner, far less to effect his escape, he managed to ingratiate himself with those officers about the court who immediately executed the king's commands, and by this means learned the various places where his friend was confined, and contrived, by a judicious application of the most effective of arguments, in some degree to alleviate his condition.

He had provisions conveyed to him, without which he must have starved; he obtained that the torments to which he was subjected should not be pushed beyond the limits of human endurance, and, on three several occasions,

he bribed the minister whose business it was to see that his monarch's most bloodthirsty behests were accomplished, to strike his name from the list of those who were ordered for execution—an evasion of his duty which was not so dangerous to that official as it sounds, because the king in his calmer moments had a salutary dread of the probable consequences of putting a British subject to death, and was not inclined to inquire too closely how it happened that an order, issued under the influence of the temporary insanity of royal passion, was not, as yet, carried into effect. But though his life was spared, the sufferings undergone by Mr. Cook were fearful. He was tortured by fire, by cord, by the rack; he was beaten; he was immured for months in a loathsome room crowded with prisoners of the lowest grade and character, where, tormented by thirst, devoured by vermin, covered with festering wounds, he lay and brooded. For the distress of his mind was

equal to that of his body, when he reflected upon the situation in which this unforeseen calamity would place his child. What would happen to her now that she received from him no means of support? The state of physical prostration to which he was reduced naturally caused him to imagine and fear the worst, and his fevered brain conjured up scenes which nearly drove him mad. From mental anguish the unfortunate prisoner was at length freed by the obscuration of his intellect. He was sent after a while far into the interior, amongst a batch of other wretches; and on their arrival one evening at the miserable hut where they were to pass the night, their jailers, to prevent the possibility of any attempt to escape, hit upon the ingenious contrivance of laying them on their backs and fastening their ankles to a long bamboo which was slung in a rope at either end. The bamboo was then hauled up to a height of about four feet, so that the prisoners rested with their necks and

shoulders on the ground and their feet in the air, a position in which any attempt at escape was certainly impossible. But their bare feet were blistered and bleeding from the long march over burning sands, the musquitoes swarmed in myriads, and—but what mind can dwell on such a horrible torment? Suffice it to say that in the morning three of the party were dead, and five, amongst whom was poor Cook, were *mad*.

Yet, wonderful to say, he lived on; and years afterwards, when the war was over, his prison doors were thrown open, and Swai-ee, receiving his fever-stricken, emaciated, and unconscious frame, tended him with such unremitting care and feminine kindness, that he tided over the crisis, and gradually and slowly progressed towards recovery. But his brain seemed to have become permanently injured, for though, with returning health, his powers of rational thought, speech, and action came by degrees back to him, his memory was gone.

Of all that portion of his life which preceded his imprisonment he at first hardly retained a trace, and though, from the continually repeated accounts of Swai-ee, he at length gained a clear notion of what had occurred since their association, his ideas concerning England, his marriage, his former friends, &c., were as vague as the fleeting thought which sometimes passes across our minds that we have somewhere seen a landscape or a face, or heard a remark which we are yet sure that we can never have seen or heard before. As time advanced, these dreamy shadows gathered more thickly and frequently around him, and he would spend hours in thoughtful silence, endeavouring to find some clue to the puzzling vibration which stirred within him at some chance word, look, or action; in vain, for so strong was the torrent which had swept over his memory, that he could hardly speak his native tongue, while of the other European languages which he had learned he retained

no recollection. In Burmese, however, he could still converse, though why, it is hard to explain—perhaps because he had shrieked and prayed for mercy in it on that fearful night.

After the lapse of some time, Swai-ee removed him to Calcutta, where he himself had business connections, and where he intended to reside for the future. And here, surrounded by Englishmen, and having the advantage of good medical treatment, Mr. Cook still further recovered his bodily health, though, of course, his constitution was terribly undermined by his long and cruel imprisonment. He likewise regained his familiarity with his native language, and his physician was of opinion that he would be immensely benefited, both in mind and body, by returning to England; and upon this advice he determined to act.

In spite of the failure of the Burmese venture, he was by no means a ruined man; and though, in consequence of his long absence

and supposed death, his affairs were in great disorder, the Calcutta lawyer in whose hands they were placed, got them straight at last; and the sums realized being invested in Indian securities, yielded a handsome income. There was no reason, therefore, why he should not go home at once.

But as this chapter has taken the bit between its teeth, and bolted years ahead of the action of the story, we must pull it up at once. As Mr. Cook's adventures are quite foreign to the Johnstone and Bathurst proceedings, and have only been thus slightly alluded to for the purpose of showing how it was that the payments to Mr. Johnstone on Minnie's account had ceased, it seemed better to tell all the little I knew about him at once, and so get rid of him.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE APRON-STRING REJOINED WITH A KNOT.

When the intoxication produced by the first draught of liberty and indulgence began to evaporate, William Bathurst found time to reflect, and then he perceived that he was going too fast and too far. It was one thing to establish a certain amount of independence in his relations with his mother, and another to treat her with positive neglect and unkindness. He was sober enough now to hear the voice of conscience, and the shrew kept on worry, worry, naggle, naggle, till he began to consider himself a downright brute. Then his thoughts recurred to Mary Johnstone, and

how probable it was that, if she heard of his late goings on, she would decline having anything more to say to him—or, at all events, that her strict and puritanical father would repudiate so dissipated a son-in-law; and the idea that he might possibly lose her, made him feel more in love with Mary than he had ever done before. Then there was his business; he had not been near the office for three days, and had not done any real work for more than a week—facts which, to a man of his previously regular habits, were almost awful to contemplate. It was not that he was in any fear about the examination which he had shortly to pass, though he did imagine it to be about tenfold more difficult than it was, for he had not spent the last few years in that listless performance of a certain routine which characterises the legal studies of too many articled clerks, but had worked really hard, and was, at the present time, no mean proficient in the knowledge of the law.

But his Uncle Horace had promised to take him so early into partnership, because he believed him to be so exemplary, hard-working, and devoted to his profession, as to be able and willing to take the principal share of the work on himself; and if he found him falling off in his attendance, and contracting idle habits, he might very likely alter his intentions, or, at all events, postpone their fulfilment until his nephew should become more settled. And this postponement would be a serious thing, for Mr. Horace Bathurst was in so failing a state that he could not go on much longer without a partner, and, if William's reception had to be deferred, it was more than probable that Mr. Skinner, the head clerk, by whose industry the business was mainly carried on, would be taken into the firm in his place.

These numerous considerations worried him so much one morning, that he determined to go to the office directly he had breakfasted,

do a good day's work, and return to Acton in the evening. Having made which resolution, he felt much more comfortable.

Whether he would have kept it or not, when the depression caused by over-night excess had been dissipated by the morning meal, taken in Leeson's reckless company, if his good angel had not lent a hand, I cannot say, but such an interposition did take place, and saved the vacillating sinner.

He found Leeson up and dressed at an earlier hour than usual, and with several letters on the table, which were not bills—which was strange, his accustomed correspondence being solely confined to that description of (pipe)-light literature.

"Well, old fellow," he said, as Bathurst entered the room, "this is most likely the last meal we shall ever eat together, so I hope you have got a good appetite. Don't look astonished, I have only got that commission in the Austrian cavalry I told you I had

applied for. That is, I have as good as got it, if I look sharp, only I must be at Vienna as soon as possible. I am thinking of starting this afternoon."

William Bathurst thought at first that his friend was joking; but when at last persuaded of the earnestness of his purpose, he could not get over the admiring astonishment he felt in contemplating the easy indifference with which he seemed ready to change habits, friends, and country at a moment's notice; and they had finally separated, and Bathurst was on his way to the city before he could make quite sure that it was not all a dream.

Skinner, the head clerk, was the only person in the inner office, a florid, robust man, who might be any age between forty-five and sixty, and having the appearance of a gentleman farmer rather than a lawyer—of a farmer who would catch the points of beast or horse at a glance, but one whom it would

be difficult to overreach on the Corn Exchange, though.

"Well, Mr. William," said this gentleman, laying down his pen and helping himself to a pinch of snuff, "good morning. Why, you are quite a stranger. And that case of Lord Closecopse *v.* Rightaway, Trespas, and others, coming on so soon, too—oh! here is a letter for you. I have had as much as I could do—indeed, more, for I have had to put off the consideration of the Selheir will case. However, we will pull up arrears now you have had your holiday, and come back; but I have had no help lately, for Mr. Horace cannot do much at present, and the articled clerks are of no use, as you know. By-the-bye, your example has proved contagious there, Mr. William—the young gentlemen have not been much more regular in their attendance than yourself. Is anything the matter? —bad news in your letter?—take a chair?—have a glass of water?"

"When did this letter come?" William gasped, painfully, directly he could get his breath, for he had turned sick and giddy on reading the few lines Mary had written to him. "This morning—thank heaven! I was afraid—but I must go at once. I cannot stop to-day, Skinner—you will be able to manage; my mother is ill, and I *must* return to Acton at once."

Who has not observed the intensity which all bodily sensations derive from contrast? A sudden transition from heat to cold, or from cold to heat, causes a temperature which on ordinary occasions would be moderate to appear excessive. It is impossible to realize the full meaning of the word *silence*, unless the ear has been previously subjected to a loud and long-continued noise; a subdued light is utter darkness to the eye which a moment before was exposed to the full glare of the sun; a throb of pain is agony when it thrills through nerves attuned to pleasure; and the

sudden cessation of protracted suffering is a positive sensual delight. So is it with mental emotions. Hope breaking upon despair, grief upon mirth, are alike almost unendurable, and it is from the furnace of such trials that the strong mind comes out invigorated and purified, the weak sodden and melted.

What a flood of reproachful thoughts poured over the soul of William Bathurst as he walked rapidly through the streets! His good, kind mother, who loved him so much, who lived only for him, laid on a bed of sickness while he was revelling. Nay, perhaps his conduct had brought on the attack which might—but no, that thought was too painful, and he strove to dismiss it; but in vain, it would recur again and again, like the ghastly shape in a fever-dream, and he hastened his steps in the endeavour to escape from himself.

He arrived at the White Horse Cellar—there was no omnibus for an hour. A whole

hour, and his mother perhaps counting the minutes for his coming. He could not wait there, and, though without the idea of in that way hastening his arrival, he walked on along the Acton Road, intending to let the omnibus overtake him. So confused was he, so deficient in presence of mind, that he had passed the fifth milestone before he remembered that he might have taken a Hansom and galloped down; and then it was too late—he would lose time by returning; besides, the omnibus must have started. Then, on passing some familiar object on the road, it occurred to him that he had already traversed the greater part of the way, and that he would probably arrive before the omnibus; and as he was walking at a great pace this was what actually happened. Now he passed the pond, now the alehouse, and now he was within sight of his home. The blinds were not drawn down, and he breathed more freely; but there was a carriage at the door, a sus-

picious-looking vehicle, close shut, sombre in colour, with a coachman who was reading a journal, like one whose life was spent in waiting. What mortal besides a doctor's coachman could enjoy a thrilling romance while expecting some one to come and interrupt him every moment?

Have you ever departed from home, leaving all there in perfect health, and has the first object which met your eyes on returning been the doctor's brougham? There are some sights which shake the strongest nerves, and that is one of them.

William Bathurst, crossing the threshold pale, breathless, disordered, and bathed in perspiration, met Mr. Hinchcliff in the hall.

"Ah!" said the old gentleman, who had assisted the young man whom he addressed to make his first appearance on any stage—had attended him in teething, measles, and all the ills which infantile flesh is heir to—who owned him, in short, as a sort of capital, which re-

turned a fluctuating interest according to the state of his health in the course of the year, "here is the truant! Here is what will do our patient more good than any amount of physic. Why, William, have you taken a short cut through the pond on the green?"

"How—how——"

"Better—a great deal better. Do not be alarmed, my dear boy; no, no danger whatever. That is, of course, with a person of your mother's age, we must be careful. But compose yourself, and go up to see her. She is up and dressed, and has taken some soup. Why, what a state you are in! You will find some one else up-stairs, eh?"

And poking his forefinger into the other's ribs, Mr. Hinchcliff darted out of the hall, and took a header into his carriage, breaking John's narrative at a point where the ghost, the heroine, and the dead body were all shut up together in a gloomy passage, the door forming the only entrance to which, and

capable of being opened from the outside alone, having been just slammed to by a sudden and supernatural gust of wind. But John was used to such contretemps, and knew that his heroine would get out all right at the next patient's.

William Bathurst, reassured as much by the doctor's cheerful manner as by what he said, went up to his mother's bed-room. Mrs. Bathurst was up and dressed, and sitting at a little table by the window. Her appearance, with the exception of a certain blueness about the lips, was much the same as usual—but she must have felt very weak, as *she was leaning back in her chair!* Mary Johnstone was sitting on the other side of the table. She felt vexed with William, and intended to let him know that fact by her reception of him, and so she rose for the purpose of gliding past him out of the room, with the gravest of recognitions; but he looked so woe-begone and repentant, that her heart relented, and she

paused, took his proffered hand, and then quietly left mother and son together.

"And you have been ill, and I stayed away! I only heard of it this morning, and I came at once. I have walked from London. Thank God, you are better! To think that there was a sort of estrangement between us when we parted!"

Such were the broken sentences which William poured out; but his look and manner were more eloquent than his tongue. Besides, the mere fact of his being present there, at her side, holding her hands, was enough for his mother, who cannot be said so much to have forgiven him as to have lost the sense of there being anything to forgive.

"What a dear good girl Mary is!" said Mrs. Bathurst, when they were both calm again. "She has been constantly here during this attack."

"Where I ought to have been!" exclaimed William.

"Hush! You did not know that I was unwell, or you would been by my side. But call Mary in, she has been waiting outside for some time."

William hastened to execute this request, but Mary had gone home.

In a few days Mrs. Bathurst was up and about as usual, and William had relapsed into the old style of life. The room he had taken in London was given up, the billiard-table knew him no more. Leeson had disappeared once more into space, like an erratic comet as he was; Skinner, the head clerk at the office, was no longer oppressed with the entire weight of the business, and heart-sick clients were not put off more than the meddler with the law has a fair right to expect. For William threw himself into his work with all the energy of repentance; and the nine o'clock omnibus never failed now to find him in the road awaiting it, while the return omnibus, leaving Piccadilly at five, often had to wait

while he ran up only just in time to catch it, breathless and laden with parchments for perusal in the evening.

What was more, he did not sigh after the pleasures he had tasted and so soon relinquished; but this it must be owned was partly in consequence of his having to work so hard to make up the arrears of business, that he had no time to think of much else, and partly because a change in his life was becoming imminent.

For, on the third morning after the knotting of the broken apron string, Mrs. Bathurst called upon Mrs. Johnstone, and urged the propriety of a time for the marriage of their children being definitely fixed.

"I am getting old," she said; "I am afflicted with a mortal disease. This last seizure was a warning which it would be presumptuous to neglect, and I shall not feel comfortable until I see William settled with a good, affectionate, and God-fearing wife, whose influence will keep

him in the right way when mine is withdrawn —it may be quickly and suddenly, by the hand of death."

"I am well aware of the advantages of the match to Mary," replied Mrs. Johnstone. "The young people love each other, and it is my dearest wish that the marriage should take place. Still, they are young yet, and I hope and trust that you have many years of life before you."

Mrs. Bathurst shook her head.

"I *know* that is not the case," she replied; "and, besides, I have learned from recent experience that the authority of a mother is galling to a young man, while the influence of a wife is a different thing altogether."

"Well," said Mrs. Johnstone with a sigh, "it will not do to be selfish, so let it be as you will, though I own that it will be a dreadful blank to me when Mary is gone. She is my only companion—and now that this sad quarrel has arisen between my son and hus-

band, I have no one but her to weep and talk about it with."

"Then Mr. Johnstone and Harry are not reconciled yet?"

"I fear they never will be! My husband declares he will not allow Harry a single penny if he insists upon marrying Minnie, and how the poor boy is to live I cannot imagine; it is little indeed that I can do for him, for Mr. Johnstone does not allow me much for housekeeping and pin-money."

"It will all come right in time," said Mrs. Bathurst, soothingly. "So good and Christian a man as Mr. Johnstone must forgive his son when his anger has passed away."

Mrs. Johnstone shook her head and sighed. If people chose to think better of her husband than he deserved, it was not for her to undeceive them.

And so it was settled between the two mothers that their children should be speedily

married, and there was nobody to forbid the banns. Mr. Johnstone was delighted, and made a liberal offer of his blessing, and a dowry of three thousand pounds—the latter to be left, however, in his business, at five per cent. He also took the opportunity of drawing a comparison between the prospects of his two children—of asserting that it was sharper than a serpent's tooth to have a thankless child, and of expressing his gratitude that his daughter, at all events, was all that could be wished. Mary got up a few blushes, and was quite willing to acquiesce in any arrangements her parents might make; and William was absurd.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### IN WHICH ALMA MATER WEANS A CHILD PREMATURELY.

THERE were only four men up—Alexander, who was supposed by his friends to be in Germany or Switzerland, but who, having dropped the supplies for his journeyings in the territory of the Duke of Baden, had been driven back to his college harbour; Tankerd, who affirmed that there was no beer fit to drink out of Oxford, and found it impossible to tear himself away from his favourite tap; and Roots and Sapper, who were ambitious of scholarships and double-firsts, and found no place so suitable for hard reading as the university, during the long vacation.

The entrance of Harry Johnstone into the dining-hall struck this quartet with unmitigated astonishment.

"Why, Johnstone, is that you?"

"Are you in the body, or spiritual?"

"What on earth brings you here?"

"Where the deuce have you come from?"

"Is it love?—or debt? Are you hiding from the pursuit of justice?"

"Come and wine with me after hall," Harry replied to all these queries, "and I will endeavour to answer you."

Dinner over, they all repaired accordingly to the rooms of the new-comer, who opened a cupboard, and produced a number of wine-glasses, and then, lifting up the sill of his window-seat, plunged his arm into the box which formed his cellar.

"Two, four, six, eight; why, by Jove! my scout has left me ten bottles out of a dozen and a half. And there are pessimists who say that there is no honesty in the world!

Can anyone find the corkscrew? Thank you. Now, then, be seated, and help yourselves. In reply to your kind inquiries, I may state that it is I; I am corporeal; the age of twenty-one, and the intention of leaving at once, bring me here; I come from McGregor's moor; everybody is in love, of course, but I am not in debt, and at present I have kept, I believe, within the pale of the law. Your healths."

"Going to leave?"

"Yes; I am ruined, and must earn my bread somehow. How convenient it would be if the converse of the Curse held good, and one could always secure a dinner by profuse perspiration of the forehead. One might spend a very jolly time in going perpetually down the river in an eight. But the difficulty is to perspire judiciously. Does any one of you want a light porter?"

"My dear fellow, you are joking, of course?"

"Not a bit, as far as the main facts go. I

am positively ruined, and in want of a situation of some sort; if there were no one dependent upon me I think I should enlist—as it is, I should like to get a clerk's place somewhere. There are no Tufts up, I suppose, or I would have a quiet toady, and see what that would do? I say, Tankerd, you are connected with a brewery, are you not?"

"Yes, my father is a partner in one," said Tankerd; "but all the clerks in the affair have capital invested in it—that is a rule, I know. If you have a little capital—three or four thousand is enough, I believe—I will speak to the governor for you, and do my best—I will indeed, old fellow!"

"Thank'ee, my dear Tankerd, all the same, but I have not got a twentieth part of the sum you mention."

"I have no ready, and cannot therefore offer you a loan," said Alexander. "But if my name at the back of a bill would be of any use——"

"Not much, I fear, my dear fellow. At the best, it would only add to your liabilities, for *I* could not meet it."

"Well," said Roots, "I must say, Johnstone, that you bear your reverses with surprising cheerfulness. I hope all the members of your family are equally philosophical."

"Heavens!" cried Harry, "I forgot that my father was in business, and that my announcement would reflect upon him. I must be more explicit, and bore you with the information that my misfortunes are entirely personal, and do not affect the remainder of my people. My father wants me to relinquish a project on which I have set my heart, and naturally declines to maintain me while I remain in opposition to his will. As I did not consider it right finally to assert my independence while I was a minor, I went to stay with McGregor directly after the first outbreak of hostilities, and remained there shooting grouse until my twenty-first birthday

arrived, a week ago. I then made a final appeal to my father, received his ultimatum, which was unfavourable to my views, and here I am. Having been hitherto entirely dependent upon my allowance from him, and being therefore thrown on my own resources somewhat suddenly, I, of course, cannot remain at college. Learned leisure and the tardy professions are not for one with whom waiting is a word synonymous with starving. I take my name off the boards to-morrow."

"But, I say, you know," said Tankerd, "is not this rather a serious thing, you know?"

"To me it is so, most certainly."

"Because you seem rather jolly about it than otherwise. I know *I* feel awfully sorry that a good fellow like you should go off like this. Hang me if I see any joke in it at all!"

"Thank you, old boy," cried Harry. "'What can't be cured must be endured' is

the best proverb in the language. Where is the wisdom of weakening one's energies by fretting at the very time one wants them in the best working order? But you must not think that I feel no regret at quitting the old place so abruptly. While I live, I shall never forget this dear old quad, or the friends who inhabited it. Perhaps the next quad I reside in, will be spelt with an O, for if honest employment fails me, I am thinking of reviving the ancient and honourable order of 'gentlemen of the road;' the audacity of the thing might make it successful for a time. However, we will give the best policy the first trial."

It was evident that Harry Johnstone was talking nonsense to keep up his spirits; so the others made no further attempt to balk him, but fell into the same humour, and built a thousand absurd and airy castles for his future habitation. The honest young fellows were sorry at heart all the time though, and felt a relief when the party broke up.

When they were all gone, and he was once more alone, Harry threw himself into a chair and fell into a painful reverie. He had hoped that his father would cool down and relent, so far as to let matters go on as they had done for another year, by which time Harry would have taken his degree, and had more opportunity for looking about him. But no; Mr. Johnstone was firm, and all he had to do was to cast about for some employment which would enable Minnie and himself to live. He could not write directly to Minnie, all whose letters were opened by her schoolmistress, but he sent innumerable veiled messages through Mary, who corresponded copiously with her friend, and received information of all Clifton proceedings through the same source. Now and then, indeed, for a treat, he got a letter from Minnie herself, who occasionally managed to slip one into the post-office unperceived by Miss Stifton—but such opportunities were rare.

While Harry was thus absorbed in his reflections, he was aroused by a knock at the door.

"Who is there?" cried he.

"It is I—Roots."

"All right!"

And Harry opened the sporting door and admitted him.

"I have come back," said Roots, "to mention a matter which I did not like to speak of before the other fellows. I do not quite know how far you were joking this evening. Are you really looking out for a clerkship in an office?"

"Most certainly and seriously I should be delighted to get such a thing," replied Harry.

"Well, then," continued Roots, "I do not know, mind, that he can do anything, but my father is a director of the Original Fire and Life Assurance Company, and if he can help you, I am sure he will. It is a poor chance; there may not be a vacancy in the

office, and if there is, my father may not have the power of getting it for you, and it will not be worth much if he has. But he is a city man, and may be able to put you in the way of trying for something else; at any rate, if you like to call upon him, I will give you a letter of introduction, and write besides by to-morrow morning's post."

"My dear fellow," said Harry, griping the other's hand, "I do not know how to thank you; whether Mr. Roots can do anything for me or no, the recollection of this kindness will cheer me up for many a long day."

"Don't mention it—I wish I could be of any real use."

"So you are. Why, an introduction to a man of business, and some idea of what to apply for and how to apply for it, were the very things I was at a loss for. You have given me the end of the clue; trust me for the rest. Even if nothing else comes of your kindness, it will secure me a good sleep to-

night, and that is something. Once more, thank you, Roots!"

On the following day, Harry settled everything he had to do at Oxford, and found himself the possessor of one hundred and twenty pounds; a very strange fact this will seem to any reader who is or has been an undergraduate, but Harry happened to combine a horror of ticks with a love of knick-knacks, and some of his little elegancies—his dressing-case, liqueur-stand, cigar-table, &c.—sold for more than half of what he gave for them.

The men who had been at his rooms the night before, together with some old friends of other colleges who happened to be up, gave him a farewell dinner that evening, and drank his health with a feeling which was not all vinous; and, on the following morning, he took his final departure from Oxford, with a heart heavy but not despairing, and Roots's promised letter in his pocket.

Being determined to enter at once upon the

course of economy and self-denial which he had mapped out for his future life, he would not go to an hotel for a single night, but, booking his luggage at the station, started off on foot to find a lodging, and finally engaged a bed-room, clean but lofty, in one of the quiet streets which meander around Hanover Square, for which, with the use of a general room in which he might breakfast, he agreed to pay thirteen shillings a week, boot-cleaning and all included ; while the charge for breakfast, if he chose to take that meal in the house, was to be five shillings a week.

Cheered by the discovery of how small an income a man might thus live upon, Harry Johnstone next turned his steps towards Hungerford Bridge, and, true to his economical resolutions, took a penny boat to the City, and pursuing his way to Broad Street, passed along that gold-paved thoroughfare with his eyes on the doorposts, until he came to the names of " Roots and Stump."

A clerk in the outer office saying yes to his inquiry whether Mr. Roots was in, he gave him his card and letter of introduction, and was almost immediately ushered into the presence of a gentleman with untidy hair, bushy eyebrows, mutton chop whiskers (grey all this), portly figure, and a rare orchid in his buttonhole.

"Mr. Johnstone?" said Mr. Roots, shaking hands. "Pray take a seat. My son advises me that you are his friend—that, in consequence of unexpected reverses, you are obliged to leave Oxford suddenly, and that you are looking out for a situation as clerk to some office or another. Is that the case?"

"Exactly, Mr. Roots."

"Well, sir, my son is a good lad, a very good, industrious lad, and it would give me great pleasure to serve any friend of his if I had the means of so doing. I will also say that I am inclined to help a young man who seems inclined to put his shoulder to the

wheel at the first brunt of misfortune, instead of throwing himself upon the charity of his friends, in a stunned sort of manner. It is not every youth, either, who can at once make up his mind to descend a round or two on the social ladder. In short, I was thinking what could be done when you came in. There is a vacant clerkship in the *Original*, of which I am a director, and I will speak to the other members of the Board, and try to gain their votes, if you like to apply for it."

"A thousand thanks for your kindness, sir," exclaimed Harry. "I should think I *would* like to apply for it!"

"Well, but hear what it is worth first. You will only get ninety pounds the first year, with a rise of ten pounds per annum till you get to a hundred and fifty; and there you stick until you are promoted to the higher salaries, by the death or retirement of the holders of them."

"It is quite as much——"

"Stop a bit. In addition to your regular salary you will receive ten per cent. upon the first premium paid up of every insurance you bring into the business, and five per cent. per annum upon every future payment until it lapses—so that the more friends you can get to insure their lives with us, the larger will be your income. Some of our clerks double their pay in this manner."

"I do not know whether I should be able to do that," said Harry. "But I shall esteem myself most fortunate if I get the chance of trying."

"Very well, then. What sort of hand do you write?"

"Copper-plate!"

"You had better send me a sample," said Mr. Roots, unable to help smiling. "Are you an equally good accountant?"

"Yes, I have learned double entry; is it not fortunate?"

"It is, indeed; boys ought always to be

taught it, in case of accidents, and yet they seldom are. Well, the Board meets next Wednesday, and if you will call upon me here on Thursday morning, I will tell you whether I can promise that you will get the clerkship or no. You are in good time, for the outgoing clerk only sent in word of his intended resignation yesterday, and he does not go for three weeks. By-the-bye, just look over the list of directors, and see whether you know any of them."

"No," replied Harry, reading over the names. "I do not see any one here whom I know, except the solicitor of the office, Mr. Bathurst."

"Horace Bathurst! do you know him?" exclaimed Mr. Roots. "Call upon him at once, and secure his interest; he has as much influence in the affairs of the Company as the chairman and any two directors rolled together. Good afternoon till Thursday."

Harry Johnstone tendered his thanks once

more, and wended his way out of the City rejoicing, determined to look up Mr. Horace Bathurst early on the following morning, before he should have started for his office. Then he turned his thoughts towards a piece of business which he began to feel to be of peculiar, nay, pressing, importance—dinner. He determined to try a different house every day, until he discovered the establishment where the best possible chop, steak, and porter was to be obtained at the cheapest rate—for he had quite given up the idea of dining at the club of which he was a member, or, indeed, of continuing his subscription when it had once lapsed; and was just about to commence his investigations by entering a well-known chop-house near Temple Bar, when a sudden thought stopped him.

He seemed to be in luck that day—why not pursue his vein, and seek out Mr. Bathurst at once? That gentleman's interest for the clerkship about to fall vacant might

be secured for another that very evening. It was five o'clock now, and he would probably be returning home. And so Harry deferred his dinner, and turned his face westwards again. Mr. Horace Bathurst lived in Portland Place, not very far from the street where Harry had his lodgings; and, at the Oxford Street crossing, whom should the latter overtake but the very man he was about to call on.

"Mr. Harry Johnstone!" cried the old gentleman, holding out his hand. "What a curious coincidence! Why, you are the very person I was thinking of at the moment. My nephew, William, has been telling me all about your affairs and the occurrences which have taken place at home, and I desired him to find out your present address, that I might write and request you to come and see me, for I want to have a little conversation with you."

"I was on my way to call on you just now," said Harry.

"Ah! you have met William, then?"

"No, sir; it was my own idea. You are solicitor to the Original Fire and Life Office, and I want your assistance to get a clerkship which will soon fall vacant there."

"I'll do my best," said the other, thoughtfully; "and I think we can secure that. It is a pity, though, with your education and advantages, that you should not get something better. But what is the use of saying that, when I do not know how otherwise to advise you? Here is my house—come in, you will dine with me, of course? My housekeeper always provides dinner on the principle of 'enough for one, enough for two.' Oh, Mrs. Scott, a friend is going to dine with me to-day; we can give him a bit of fish and a slice of mutton—can we not?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" replied a buxom, good-tempered-looking dame, dropping the most respectable of curtsies at the new-comer.

The "bit of fish, and slice of mutton"

evolved itself into a highly *recherché* little dinner, to which the younger man did ample justice, though the other had apparently but little appetite.

"What wine will you have?" said the host when the cloth was removed; "port, claret, or Madeira? Never mind me, but help yourself—I am dieted, unfortunately."

"I am sorry to hear that, sir," said Harry. "I hope it is nothing serious?"

He had noticed that the old gentleman seemed to be much more infirm than when he had last seen him.

"The most serious complaint that man can have," returned Mr. Horace, smiling; "and one he is sure to die of, if nothing else cuts short his career—old age. The machine is wearing out, and a very little puts the works out of order; it has been rather more cranky than usual lately, and yesterday was the first time for some weeks that I have been able to take it down to the City to attend to its

business. However, it is going again now, and I hope to be able to look after this matter for you. I will send a line this evening, by-the-bye, to Mr. Roots, one of the most influential directors——"

"I have already secured him," interrupted Harry. "His son is a friend of mine, and was the first to put me up to trying for the clerkship."

"That is all right, then," said Mr. Bathurst. "With him to help you, you are pretty safe. But now about this business with your father; it is a sad affair, as I understand it from William; a complete rupture; and your leaving Oxford, and seeking this employment so suddenly, looks as if he had not exaggerated."

"It is indeed a serious thing for a son to become estranged from his parent," replied Harry; "and nobody can feel that more keenly, or with deeper regret, than myself."

And then, at the other's request, he went into a full detail of all the circumstances of the case.

"William's account, then, was accurate," said Mr. Horace, when the other had concluded; "and I really cannot bring myself to blame you. Many people, I am aware, would consider that your feelings and engagements with respect to Miss Cook are of no account, in comparison with the duty you owe your father; but poor Cook was one of my oldest and dearest friends, and I am prejudiced by the interest I feel in his daughter. And now what are your plans? You need not fear taking me into your confidence, and I may be able to aid you with a suggestion."

"Minnie," replied Harry, "is at school at Clifton. My intention is, so soon as I have secured the means of living, and a small lodging, to go down there, run off with her to Scotland, and marry her."

"Your salary will be ninety pounds the

first year. Do you mean to say that you can keep your wife upon that?"

"My mother thinks that she will be able to send me at least fifty pounds in the course of the year, and I may be able to increase my income by getting friends to insure in the office. Then my salary will be more next year, and Minnie has two thousand pounds, which my father must give up when she is of age, even if he detains it till then, which I am pretty certain he will not do; and the interest upon that will be upwards of sixty at the present price of consols. For of course I shall put that in the funds—it will be all she will have to fall back upon, if anything should happen to me, poor girl! Altogether, we shall be able to manage to get shelter, bread, meat, and beer, with a trip to Richmond or Hampstead on fine Sundays. What more can an office clerk look for? And Minnie will be happier so than as a governess, a position for which she is utterly unfitted."

"And if you have a family?"

"Ah! that is the worst of it. I know that we are not going into a bed of roses; this is no romantic, hairbrained, foolish match—for much as I love Minnie, I had rather wait a few years, till we could marry with comfort and prudence. But you see she has no other protector, poor girl!"

"I tell you what, you are a fine-hearted fellow, Harry, and there are not many others like you. Many a man would risk his life for the girl he loves—but give up fortune?—lose position? No. You must add about one hundred pounds a year to your estimate of income, however, as I shall request you upon your marriage to accept some shares I have in the *Original*, the interest upon which will be about that. Not a word! I am a childless man, and I should be miserable if I did not do something for the orphan girl of my poor lost friend. There is another point —I do not like Scotch marriages."

"Nor I, sir; but what else can I do?"

"Why, there is an old lady living in Monmouth who is a cousin of Mr. Cook's. She is an old maid, very eccentric, and my poor friend once offended her, and that is the reason why her name has never been mentioned. This Miss Lloyd is a client of mine, and I believe I have more influence over her than any one else has, though that is not saying much. Anyhow, the old girl has a spice of romance in her, and loves a bit of a love-match dearly; and I think, if I make the story interesting enough, she will espouse your cause, and give Minnie hospitality until such time as you can be married from her house. And as she is her only relation that I know of, she has certainly as much right over her during her minority as any one else except your father, and I take it his guardianship is a very doubtful matter."

"This is indeed good news, and relieves me of a very great difficulty," cried

Harry. "We can get from Bristol to Monmouth so easily too."

"You must tutor Minnie to put up with the old lady's ways, which are rather trying," continued Mr. Horace. "But there is one more difficulty you must allow me to remove; there is no carrying on a campaign without the sinews of war, and of these you cannot be very flush. I will sign you a cheque for a hundred pounds now while I think of it, for my memory is not what it was. And now," he continued, suppressing Harry's thanks, "you must bid me good night, for my doctor makes me go to bed early. I shall be able to tell you before the meeting of the Board whether you may rely upon getting this clerkship; and if the answer is favourable, which I hardly doubt, you can proceed to carry off the lady at once. At least, as soon as I hear from Miss Lloyd that she is ready and willing to receive her. If her reply is unfavourable, you can fall back on the original Gretna Green

plan. I shall be able to let you know in a day or two, for the old lady is punctuality itself, and is sure to reply by return of post."

Harry Johnstone felt inclined to go home dancing the polka, but a due regard for public opinion caused him to repress this inclination, and he walked soberly though airily along, with the thumb and forefinger of his right hand in his waistcoat-pocket fingering the cheque, for if he withdrew them for a moment, he felt persuaded that the events of the day were but a dream. His landlady, who slept next door to him, heard him spouting in the middle of the night:

> "There is a tide in the affairs of men,
> Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune,"

and concluding that her new lodger was a play-actor, soothed herself with visions of future orders.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

BOUND
BY
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